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# LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS

*An Anthology of Lenten Essays*

EDITED BY

MARTIN CALDWELL



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## PREFACE

FOR many years this editor and his publishers have sensed the growing need for an anthology of miscellaneous essays on Lenten themes which would combine intellectual content with devotional intent, seeking concurrently to meet the needs of both minds and hearts. We trust, therefore, that the short pieces included here will be found to be neither sterile academic treatises nor yet sentimental devotional exercises. Perhaps it may be said that we have sought to produce sermons which are to be read rather than heard and whose general aim is to instruct the mind as well as to stimulate the heart. Keeping a good Lent encompasses both.

I am much beholden to the Churchmen whose essays are included here. In the midst of a busy Lenten schedule each of them diverted time, energy, and thought from their regular chores to make their contributions to this anthology.

Too, I am grateful to Dr. Nancy Rhys-Appley for reading the manuscripts and suggesting the order in which they are arranged, and to Miss Babette Skinner for typing the final version and reading the proofs.

R. M. C.

The Scripture quotations in this book designated *R.S.V.* are from the Revised Standard Version of *The Holy Bible*, copyrighted 1946 and 1952 by the Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches.



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# 1

## THE UNIQUE GOD

*by*

T. S. K. SCOTT-CRAIG, PH.D.

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Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is Unique;  
and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy  
brain and with all thy heart and with all thy brawn.

### I

HOW necessary it is that we should, from time to time, listen to the old, old story in unfamiliar words. The message of Moses, the message of Christ, the message of the Church, which is a single message, gets jammed and blurred by the many other messages that use the same words as our traditional terms. And so our message is made of no effect.

How insignificant to hear from Moses that God is One! The wisdom of ancient Egypt and of ancient India knew as much and said it better. And to be asked to love that One with all our heart and soul, as we usually say, makes God sound like a romantic who had to correct Himself later by adding strength and still later by adding mind.

The love of the Lord and the Lord whom we should love, the very foundation of the Christian cult and the Christian code, are today a blur in the public mind, including, unfor-

tunately, too much of the Christian mind. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is not just One, He is Unique." "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *lev*," literally the heart, but for the Hebrews the seat of intelligence; "and with all thy *nephesh*," roughly, all thy emotions. With all thy mind and with all thy emotions; "and with all thy strength." But the strength is not something added; this is Hebrew poetry with its famous way of saying the same thing over again in different words. "With all thy mind and with all thy emotions, *that is to say*, with all thy strength." Or in downright English, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy brain and with all thy heart and with all thy brawn."

## II

A god who was not unique could hardly make such extravagant claims on our total devotion. A god who was merely *one* might lay claim to our brains; for it takes quite a brain to reduce the multiplicity of the world to a bare unity; to reduce good and evil, life and death, you and me, to some ineffable oneness. A god who was merely *many* might lay claim to our emotions, for it takes a lot of brawn to satisfy all the emotions—hate and love, joy and fear, ambition and humility—even seriatim not to speak of simultaneously. But only a Unique God could lay claim to mind and emotion alike, lay claim to our total strength. And blessed are we that such is our God, the Lord our Strength and our Redeemer.

Such is the God of Israel and the Church, who names His people after Himself, the people of Isra-el, of El who does battle, the strong one who does battle. Such is the God who empowered Joshua to enter the promised land, and who in the new and greater Joshua, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, uniquely battled anti-god to bring his people to a still better

country. He is the one who in Samson, the imperfect Nazarite, drove off the Philistine; and who in Jesus, the perfect Nazarite, hence called Jesus of Nazareth, forever beat down death and sin. Such is the Spirited One who, in His symbolic body the Church, placards His triumphant agony on the holy altar, and calls on His people everywhere to fill up the measure of His creative sufferings.

Such is our religion, and such is our God. The religion like the God is unique. But how well is it known?

How well is it known even to ourselves? In Monumental Church in Richmond, Virginia, there used to be in the apse, behind the Holy Table, two enormous and impressive Tablets of the Law. They were banished to the church hall when the building was gothicized, which looks like abandoning stark reality for pleasant decoration. But I'm not so sure. The tablets began thus: "And God spake all these words, saying, Thou shalt not. . . ." Now, if you look in the Prayer Book where the Ten Commandments appear, you will read rather differently: "God spake these words, and said: I am the Lord thy God, Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." Yet neither these tablets, nor at this point the Prayer Book, are true to the Bible. What Holy Writ records is: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God *which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Presbyterian commentaries on Holy Scripture note that the Commands are set in the context of the Divine Action; Jews and Roman Catholics use the full form which brings out the meaning of the Bible. Why do we conceal from ourselves that the divine commands are laid on the Old Israel and on the New because of the unique redemptive acts of the Unique God?



How well is our religion known to others? In a brilliant and moving address, Robert Oppenheimer recently climaxed the bicentennial celebrations of Columbia University, and showed himself to be one of the few men who really know the depth and height as well as the breadth of science. He spoke as one "knowing his limitations, knowing the evils of superficiality and the terrors of fatigue." And he summoned each of us, and how rightly, "to cling to what is close to him, to what he knows, to what he can do, to his friends and his tradition and his love, lest he be dissolved in a universal confusion, and know nothing and love nothing." "This is the condition of man; and in this condition," he concluded, "we can help *because we can love one another*." Why can we love one another? How can we love one another? And not merely in justice, but with mercy. Surely there is more connection than Mr. Oppenheimer appears to allow between his tradition and his love; between the religious tradition of a uniquely loving God and our unique response both to Him and to our fellows.

Others see it. Almost on the same day that Mr. Oppenheimer spoke, the distinguished biologist, Professor Evelyn Hutchinson of Yale, said in print that the fundamental problem of the modern world is our *inability* to love one another. He noted that the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research seems to have been set up largely in the belief that medicine can replace theology, and that hospitals can replace cathedrals, "thus nullifying much of the good that we could do." Modern liberal rationalism, he went on to say, rejects the first of Christ's commandments, but accepts the second, even though rejecting the first makes it impossible to make sense out of the second. "If we regard God as the highest good, then our duty to our neighbor is to give him every opportunity for loving God also. If we reject the idea of God, then the best thing we can do for

our neighbor is to make life run as smoothly as possible for him, and then try to relieve the tedium of the evenings by patronizing the ballet and listening to the music of Bach and Mozart."

But the biologist does not leave it there. These musical activities, he adds, are very dangerous; for they might bring our neighbor to his knees and so shatter the whole system. They might even bring him to the Eucharist, to the mystery of the sacrifice of the Son of God as a life-giving victim. And I think and I pray, that the more Mr. Oppenheimer, as a reverent scientist with profound insight, practises his science and his art, the more he will come to understand his religious tradition, and re-discover the deepest reason why we can love each other deeply, the very simple reason that as children of a uniquely loving God, we can be brought in a unique way to love each other also.

### III

But that means that on you and me is laid the task of making much clearer to the world what we stand for, of making it clearer both in word and action.

Not long ago I was taking part in a religious emphasis week at a large university in one of our larger cities. I was housed in a downtown hotel. On my desk was a big blotter, big enough to have advertisements at each end. At the left hand was a long list telling me all the places I could go to church. And at the right hand was a similar list of stores in town where I could "shop in confidence." And I had the strange feeling that the people of that city really believed not only that religion somehow enabled one to shop in confidence, but even that religion was a kind of shopping around in churches. So I was not too surprised on leaving the hotel to

walk the few blocks to the university, when I encountered a store with a neon sign blinking even in the daytime, and advertising "Church Goods, Inc." Is that what we are, just church goods?

Or again, you may recall the religious movie of some years ago called *The King of Kings*. It is said, on what authority I do not know, that the famous actor Charles Laughton went onto the set one day while the movie was under construction, and inquired of the producer how he felt when making such a movie. The latter pondered a while and came up with, "Very close to God." Said Mr. Laughton, "How cozy."

If the Church and the Christians were afflicted today with spectacular crimes; if we could point to Inquisitions, Unholy Wars like the Crusades or the seventeenth-century Wars of Religion; if we even had Christians supporting outright slavery instead of serfdom, we could do something obvious about it. But when the Church becomes respectable in a vulgar sort of way, when our unique response to the Unique God becomes a cozy affair; if we just purvey church goods and develop into a sort of ecclesiastical Levittown, then it is little wonder that the world dismisses us as irrelevant and inconsequential.

#### IV

We are a liturgical Church, a worshipping Church; the Church of the Prayer Book rather than of the Confessions or of a pyramidal hierarchy. But when we meet together for common worship, can we honestly say as we make the Common Prayer that we are worshipping God our Strength with all our brain and with all our brawn, with our whole strength?

Above all, when we celebrate before the Divine Majesty that memorial which His Son has willed us to make, do we *really* have in remembrance His blessed passion, mighty resur-

rection, and glorious ascension? Do we present unto Him our *self*, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice? And although we are unworthy to offer unto Him *any* sacrifice, do we beseech Him to accept our bounden duty and service?

If we do not, and indeed if we do, let us beseech Him to accept a unique response of brain and brawn; beseech the Lord, the Unique, to bring our prayers and our supplications, through the ministry of His holy angels, before the face of His Divine Majesty; so that, knowing and loving Him truly, we may also truly know and truly love our fellow men.



## 2

# CHRIST the VANQUISHED and CHRIST the KING

by

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It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received,  
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

—I Timothy 1:15 (R.S.V.)

HOWEVER numerous other differences may be, there is one basic belief that all orthodox Christians hold in common even though it is interpreted in several divergent ways. That cardinal belief is that Jesus Christ was God. "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father," as we affirm in the Nicene Creed. Jesus Christ was Deity, not divinity alone.

"Very God of very God," and for the orthodox Christian this is the minimal confession, that Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God Himself. The confession of the incarnation of God in Jesus as the Christ is the primary and distinctive premise for Christian theology and Christian faith. The Incarnation is both the central fact and the central paradox in a religion of paradox. Yet, paradoxical as it may be, apart from

it, human life is empty, meaningless, and incomplete, both in time and beyond time, both in this world and in the next.

If the real meaning of life for us as Christians is to be found, then, in the Incarnation, the meaning and purpose of the Incarnation itself must be sought out and constantly re-examined in the light of the Bible, historical theology, and our own contemporary experience of it. The root question is "Why?" *Why* Incarnation? *Why* did God humble Himself, empty Himself to come to us men in the body of a man like ourselves? Why did He come and live and die? In other words, *why* Jesus Christ? Why Christianity at all?

## I

To answer our questions we must begin at the beginning of all human life. Whether we interpret him as symbol or empirical fact, we must first turn to Adam. Following Professor Cullmann's *Heilsplan*,<sup>1</sup> we read in the third chapter of Genesis how the first man was destined by the Lord God to rule over all creation and how Adam, exerting his God-given free will, ate of the forbidden fruit and "fell." His fall from grace into sin, from loving community into exile, according to the Genesis account, evoked God's curse and involved mankind and all creation in estrangement from God.

Yet, as we progress through the Scriptures, we read that from out of the descendants of exiled Adam, God in His love chose one group, raised up one nation, the people of Israel, for the salvation of the world, to return the world to the perfect holy community which Adam had enjoyed before. "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine,

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Koenigsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament* (Zollikon-Zürich, 1946), pp. 35 ff.; cf. also *Christus und die Zeit*, pp. 99 ff.

and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5, R.S.V.). But the injunctions were not heeded and the covenants were not kept by this nation ordained of God to be His holy instrument in the salvation of the world, so we must read further.

Therefore, within the nation Israel a further reduction suddenly took place. It was a reduction to a still smaller human community whose purpose, like that of Adam and Israel, was to fulfill the purpose of God. It was sometimes called *qahal Jahve*, sometimes *qahal Yisrael*, the "congregation," or, as modern scholars like to translate it, the "remnant" of Israel. Yet in due time, like Adam and like the nation, the remnant, too, proved insufficient to carry out the purpose of God, unworthy of His merciful love. Therefore, as we proceed through the Old Testament, we come to see the pattern emerge. From all mankind in Adam, Israel was raised up. Like Adam, Israel proved unworthy and inadequate. So from Israel a remnant was chosen, but the remnant of the nation also failed in its ordained task, that of the reconciliation of men and their Creator.

Now, once again, for a third time, God attempts to reconcile His creatures with Him. He again compresses and reduces. As we pass from the Old Testament into the New, one Individual enters into history. His task is that which was given to Adam, who failed; then to Israel, which failed; and to the remnant of Israel, which failed. The one Man who alone is able to take upon Himself Israel's function is the "servant of Jahve" in Deutero-Isaiah, the "Son of Man" in Daniel, representing the "people of the saints" (Daniel 7:13ff.). When all else has failed, the individual must enter into the historical scheme. The Individual is the Incarnation of God Himself, Jesus as the Christ, who, again acting as the instrument of God, attempts

to accomplish the end for which all mankind was created, perfect loving communion between Creator and creation. Only God Himself entering history, through His sacrificial death on a cross, can accomplish the task for which Adam had been created, Israel called, and the remnant chosen; the task of reconciling all men with the perfect love of God. The purpose and goal of the Incarnation is reconciliation and salvation. *Why Jesus Christ?* A vagrant verse in the First Epistle to Timothy gives us the answer: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Timothy 1:15, R.S.V.).

Thus we see that the history of history, which is the history of salvation and reconciliation, may be thought of as a progressive reduction: All (Adam), the Many (Israel), the Few (*qahal Yisrael*), and the One, the Incarnation of God Himself in Jesus Christ, whom Saint Paul calls the "Second Adam." Thus indeed has human history arrived at its center, its turning point. Yet the Incarnation is only a turning point, not the end. The course of the history of salvation has yet fully to be run, for the sin of Adam is still in the world.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to reverse the process. Now we proceed not from the Many to the One, but from the One to the Many. But it must be done in such a way that the Many represent the One, carrying out in subsequent history the work of the One. The way now leads from Jesus Christ to those who believe in Him, to those who know themselves to be saved from their sin by faith in His vicarious death on the cross. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22, R.S.V.). Therefore, the way leads to the Church, the Body of the One, the Christ. The Church is now to fulfill for mankind the task wherein the remnant had failed; therefore, she takes for herself the name of that



remnant, *gehal Jahve*, which is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *ekklesia*, "Church," the New Israel.

Thus we see that the Biblical history of salvation, the story of all the descendants of Adam, runs its course in two movements. The first runs from the Many to the One, from Moses to Christ, and it is called the Old Covenant. The second movement runs from the One to the Many, from Christ to this very day, and it is called the New Covenant, not yet complete until all are one again in perfect holy communion with God. Precisely between the two covenants is the decisive *factum*, the atoning death of our Lord on a cross. The Cross, therefore, becomes the turning point of all human history and the center of our Christian faith.

## II

The late Canon Oliver Quick once agreed in part with the easy generalization that Roman Catholics, in the "mood" of their theology, are essentially crucifixionists, while most non-Romans are essentially resurrectionists. The truth in this statement may be attested by an examination of the central symbolism of two branches of the Church.<sup>2</sup> For present purposes we may designate the first as Roman Catholic, the other as both Anglican and Protestant. Above the altar in a Roman sanctuary there hangs a crucifix, the symbol of a suffering, dying Lord. On the altars and tables in the front of most other churches there stands a naked resurrection cross, a cross on which our risen Lord no longer hangs. To transform the resurrection symbolism during Passiontide, in liturgical churches the naked cross is usually draped in purple, then in black for Good Friday.

Now I would not advocate that Protestants put crucifixes

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Appendix B, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, by Martin Caldwell.

in their churches on Good Friday any more than I would suggest that Roman Catholics utilize resurrection symbolism between Easter and Pentecost. Yet each of these branches of the Church appears to have overlooked an essential element of truth symbolized in the usage of the other. As Romans sometimes appear to stress unduly the Suffering Saviour, never fully progressing to the ultimate victory of Christ over death in triumphant Easter, so some Protestants or Anglicans would appear to be eager to celebrate Easter without first passing through the blackness of Good Friday. Do you remember the words of Cranmer? "Jesus went not up to joy but *first* he suffered pain, and entered not into glory *before* he was crucified."

The Easter resurrection is the *means* by which men may turn in faith to the Christ who sacrificed His earthly life for us on Good Friday. Yet, without crucifixion, resurrection could not have been. Christ's atonement is one act of which His crucifixion and His resurrection are, as it were, reverse sides. Resurrection is necessary to complete the atonement which was begun with the crucifixion, but without death there can be no rising from the dead. Without Good Friday there can be no Easter. To emphasize Easter, as we appear to be doing increasingly in some quarters, to the neglect of Good Friday is to devalue the primary turning point of our individual lives and corporate history.

On the first Good Friday man's most terrible sin was committed; he crucified the innocent Son of God. And yet, paradoxically, in the same act at the same moment, God in suffering love restored us descendants of exiled Adam to the loving community from which the first Adam had fallen so long before. Through the death of the Second Adam we are reconciled with our God, from the presence of whom the first Adam was driven. Yet this potentially perfect reconciliation is accom-

plished by God only through the worst sin of men. As it has often been said, crucifying Jesus was the worst thing that man could do to God; yet being crucified, suffering, and dying was the best thing that God could do for man. And, paradoxically, both were accomplished at the same instant in the same act on the same cross.

### III

The purpose of the Incarnation, then, is the reconciliation of man with his God. Through the crucifixion and atoning death of Jesus Christ, the One, the task of the Many and of the Few has been potentially accomplished. With the reversal of the historical process from the Many to the One, now from the One to the Many, the Church as the body of the One, has begun. The Atonement, therefore, both for each man and for all mankind, is the turning point of all history and the means of our salvation through our Easter faith in what was accomplished there.

Therefore, the climax and goal of the Lenten season, Good Friday, is truly a day of darkness and defeat, because our Lord is dead. Yet it is also a day of light and victory for, through His precious death and passion, our long exile from the presence of God can be over.

The paradox of Good Friday is symbolized for us that day on our altars. On or above the altars in most Anglican churches there stands a resurrection cross. It is draped in black to show our limitless sadness and remorse, sadness in His death and remorse for our sin. The candles have been extinguished and taken away and the altar itself made bare. Yet, this is not quite as things ought to be on Good Friday; the cross, though veiled, is not yet empty. Three days must pass.

Above the altars in other churches there hangs another kind



of cross, a crucifix, which perhaps comes closer to catching the real meaning of this paradoxical day. And yet, the crucifix emphasizes one side of the paradox, the side of darkness and defeat, as much as the resurrection cross emphasizes the side of light and victory.

The true symbol of bad Good Friday, as it might well be for every day of the Christian year, the symbol which most fully embodies Christian faith and teaching is in neither of these completely, and yet in both. Perhaps, in this matter, we should again return to antiquity and increasingly utilize the symbol in which the clue to the essential paradox of the Christian faith may most clearly be seen. The symbol is called the *Christus Rex*. Our Lord is still upon the cross. He suffers and He dies; and yet He has been transformed. His crown of thorns has become a crown of gold and his coarse linen cloth has been transformed into silken robes of royal purple. Our dying Lord still hangs upon the cross, but through suffering and defeat, He triumphs. Christ the vanquished becomes Christ the King. *Christus Rex*! Jesus is dead, but in His death we are given eternal life. God's greatest defeat is also His most magnificent victory.

"It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." On *Good Friday* the task of Israel and its remnant is done. That for which the Word became flesh on Christmas Day has been accomplished. The way is now opened so that each descendant of Adam may be restored to full communion with God.

"It is finished," our Saviour said. *What* is finished? Not alone Jesus' life—St. John grasped the deeper meaning—but that which God became man to do. On *Good Friday*, the Christ, even in death, has triumphed, for we, through Him, have been reconciled with our God.



# 3

## ONE THING THOU LACKEST

*by*

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THE humanism of the present arises out of two errors: the conviction that man's need is the paramount problem of the universe, and the mistaken idea that the potential within man, if properly activated, controlled or released, can be developed to meet that need.

In recent years groups of specially selected lay people have been faced with this question in dynamic group situations: "What is man's basic need?" Generally this brings back a flood which runs the glib gamut from "Food, Shelter, and Clothing" through the psychiatrist's understanding of "Acceptance," to the "Faith, Hope, and Love" of First Corinthians, Chapter thirteen. Occasionally, attempts are made to interpret the question so that it is met on a deeper level by associating with it the questions: "What is preventing man from fulfilling the destiny to which God calls him? What does man need before he can be whole? What does man *really* need?" This "charging" of the question generally has the effect of lifting the thinking above a merely materialistic answer. But invariably the question causes a wrestle in a normal group, even in a group of clergy.

Man is incomplete as he stands. The Biblical drama of God's search for man and the waywardness of man's response indicates this clearly. The chaos which man visits upon his fellow has been the most shattering shock in the wall of Deweyism which the world built round itself between the two great wars. Out of the resulting confusion there has arisen a greater search for a real assessment of man's situation and a greater willingness to see the need for God's taking a hand in the affairs of men.

This incompleteness is also seen in the New Testament concept of "perfection," so grossly misunderstood in many religious circles. We err by reading into "perfect" the challenge "blameless," and great damage has been done to emotional nature by placing on man a burden he never should have been asked to bear. Man stumbling toward a far horizon of sinlessness is the Old Testament man, so thoroughly surrounded by the fences and crutches of legalism that he both stumbles because of his nature and sprawls over the abundance of crutches along the way.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

". . . My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

". . . teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

". . . that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).

In every instance quoted above the root word behind "perfect" is *teleo*, which literally means "finished," "complete," "having all its parts." Two other words are, from the Greek,

translated as "perfect." One of these means approximately the same as *teleo*: *Kataitizo*, e.g., I Thessalonians 3:10; II Timothy 3:17; Ephesians 4:12. The other word is *akribo* and bears the sense of "exactness." In all, the word "perfect" or one of its forms appears in the New Testament fifty-five times. In thirty-seven instances the root word is *teleo*, meaning "finished," "complete."

Man, even the man brought to the peak to which human enterprise and co-operation can bring him, has something missing. Man at his best in all ages has been well aware of this and much of man's search has arisen out of a restlessness, an impatience with man as man. This has frequently led to the extreme of a rejection of man, or even of self. The hermit lonely in his cave, and the infested scum of humanity in the dark holes of life are evidence of these rejections. Man has a basic lack, a part is missing.

It is as if the mechanic had created an automobile that always, in spite of his most imaginative inventions, persisted in going in the wrong direction. In what other way can we understand the many tragedies that take place in the name and motive of love?

Picture the woman who surrounds her only son with all that her love and resources can provide. In so doing she establishes a relationship of dependence and affection which, to her, is gratifying and a further encouragement to more protection. Little does she realize that what she has thought of as love has, in the end, established a self-centered, immature, over-dependent, unhappy soul who eventually comes to respond to this love with hatred. As life goes on and she sees the result of all this in the life of one she still loves in spite of the hatred, she is driven to the awful conclusion that what she thought was love for him was really love for herself.

Man with any power of valid evaluation can see again and again the great gulf fixed between intention and achievement, design and performance. It drives him to a sense of futility or an attitude of indifference, both resulting in an abdication.

"One thing thou lackest," said Jesus to the desirable young man who stood so close to the path of discipleship. And reaching out He put His finger on not the thing he lacked, but the things that he possessed.

Man is incomplete as he stands. One way of seeing how awful is the incompleteness is to say that he does not know how to deal with the pressures, both within him and surrounding him, which would persuade him to make himself his own God.

Our very nature rebels so at the thought of self-worship that without realizing it we set up devices which hide the truth even from ourselves. This so frequently happens when man devotes his life to some god he can control—his money, his family, his business, his wife. But this is only another form of selfishness even when it has all the earmarks of self-sacrifice.

But usually man is not so subtle. We all know of those who, though they would never admit it, blandly set themselves in the middle of their universe and expect life to revolve around them. Family becomes a private empire to be controlled; wife a chattel to make him comfortable; business associates pawns to be traded; politics a machine to be worked; community enterprise a tool for self-advancement or self-expression.

Most of us are happiest when our little world happily revolves around ourselves, and we busy ourselves at enlarging our empire or making it revolve more satisfactorily. We are like boys with elaborate mechanic sets making everything fit into place and respond to our touch. Without much thought as to what the machine should really be doing, we fashion our



engines of self-expression or self-enlargement to the greater glory of us.

There shines over my left shoulder as I write a large cross outlined in bright red neon light. Flashing in the middle, in bright green, stands the large letter C and two other C's traced within the first. The sign is fixed on the front of a hospital which stands in the midst of one of the largest shopping centers on the American continent—or it will be when the bulldozers and concrete mixers have finished their work.

Far beneath the cross, yet bathed in its glowing neon, stands a ten-foot boulder bearing a large brass plate which declares that all this is dedicated to the ingenuity of those who conceived the plan to build it.

“Therefore it is fitting that this symbolic rock be dedicated to the \_\_\_\_\_ Center and the progressive new concept of its participants in peaceful arts of commerce. This is inscribed to those whose foresight, enterprise and service made this dream a living reality.”

What was a swampy marsh two years ago now blooms in the desert of suburbia, the myriad lights of self-enterprise making their ingenious appeals to man's self-centeredness.

And my senses are so warped that I easily respond to this temptation to self-interest. I am born into the world a bundle of desires to be cuddled, warmed, and fed. From the moment of my birth, life begins its awful process of convincing me that the world exists to minister to my needs. From earliest moments of grasping I make all that I can reach “mine,” and I shriek if any attractive bit turns out to be someone else's.

As my wobbly legs carry me out into the adventures of social contacts the hardest lesson I have to learn is that everyone I meet does not yet consider me the center of the universe. So I develop little tricks which seize attention, and Mother's

tea party becomes a captive audience for my favorite nursery rhymes or well carpeted somersaults. Thus my very dependence as an infant, and adult response to my helplessness, has already laid a stumbling block in the path of my ever growing up. For the process of maturation is seen, at least in part, in making the transfer from self-centeredness to some other center. And many there are who cannot make the leap; too much of their life has taught them rather to cling to the selfishness of infancy.

I have occasionally stood with the hundreds who on sunny winter days stand around the skating rink in Rockefeller Center. There seems always to be a fringe of people gazing over the parapet to the shiny surface below. They are usually workers from nearby offices out for fresh air at noon, or tired shoppers pausing before the next frantic assault, or sight-seers caught in the splendor of skyscrapers which makes the island of Manhattan an almost ridiculous sight on a continent of such wide spaces.

These are casual watchers, half seeing and half decided that it is about time to move on. But a hundred feet below a skater buys a ticket and glides out on the ice. How much those dimes and quarters have bought! Not only fresh air and exercise but, behold, a captive audience—captured in reality by the sheer necessity to pause in the midst of a rushing existence. What an opportunity for exhibition. A man who has already completed his allotted span of years is seen to cavort there in gaudy silk with hands waving like graceful leaves. He skates with the far-away look of one enraptured. His ticket has bought him much!

So many of the impelling forces within me trip me up in any journey I would make to any other center than myself. But worse still, so much of the world around me seems to collaborate with me in the myth that I have constructed.

A business associate wishes to gain my favor. He does it most successfully by the many subtle ways of reminding me of my own importance and the glory of my accomplishments. A community project wishes my support. It assures a hearing by making ample provision that the support I have given will receive its due reward in community attention. My own son "softens me up" and assures a happy decision by the many little-boy ways of hero worship.

There is no greater threat to the development of the truly creative artist as a whole person than the danger that egocentricity will lead to eccentricity. But this creative person is caught in the almost inescapable mesh that appreciation of what he has created is almost always of the kind which bolsters his personal opinion of himself and leads him to barter on the high opinion others have of him. The same is true for the myriads of people in the entertainment world.

Man's greatest lack is that he cannot deal adequately with those forces which make him into a god. Why should these forces be "properly dealt with"? Is this only a question of morals? Is this only another form of sin explicitly pronounced against in the First and Second Commandments? True, it is sin, but should we not also see the many tragedies scattered about the world because people have become their own god and in the real test their god has miserably failed them?

The tragedy of Alexander the Great surveying his conquests and nodding in the accepted god-like fashion is repeated in the modern movie of the actress who refused to admit she had been dethroned by the very mortal process of growing old. Our mental institutions are full of people who, even in their own warped thinking, can no longer look to themselves as omnipotent and all-glorious. So they parade around as Napoleon or Superman, still caught in a deadly demand for a god



that doesn't fail, but now unable to establish meaningful contact with any god they cannot control.

We finite beings, by the mere fact of our own finiteness, have the continual twofold struggle, on the one hand, against being persuaded to worship ourselves and, on the other, against allowing others to look to us as god. How comfortable that world is where mankind bows at our presence and hastens to fulfill our slightest wish! How easily this situation becomes established in families, in classrooms, in parishes, in communities. But what greater damage could I do than develop in people an allegiance to a god who eventually must fail them? Here is one of the great dangers in being a parent. Children begin their days attributing to their parents most of the same characteristics which in later life they ought to be attributing to God. But what a terrible tragedy when the necessary transfer of these attributes has not taken place! Sooner or later the limitations of human judgment or the mere fact that our knowledge is finite or sheer inability to do what we know very well we ought to do—all of these things, and many others, topple pseudo-gods into the dust, but how great the havoc on those who have looked to them as gods.

Man does not know how to deal with these forces that set him up on the highest pedestal in his own, or someone else's, heart. Often man has not the least desire to change the situation. But if man is ever to have the strength to meet life and face up to its reality, to face the certain knowledge of darkness and death, he needs a better god than humanity can provide.

Here, then, is man's great need—to dethrone himself and allow the One, Omnipotent, All-Knowing God who has created all things to come to His true place in every man's life. And this is not only a need that man has felt, it is a need that God has been always trying to fulfill.



Holy Scripture, so often described as "God's search for man," can also be seen as an account of God's attempts to meet man's greatest need. See how many attempts, all of them futile, are recorded in the Old Testament.

Man set in a beautiful garden enjoying close communion with his Maker but not yet aware of "good and evil" is a picture of an attempt to meet the basic need of man by keeping him protected from the evil of his own choices. Man chose and was banished from the Garden.

God's further attempt to deal with man's selfishness in the flood was also doomed to failure. Odets in the current stage play, *The Flowering Peach*, makes it obviously clear that Noah and his family only became a very narrow funnel through which the whole flood of human sin was transferred from pre-flood to post-flood days.

Then God gave them judges and kings and surrounded them with the crutches of legalism. He sent prophets who clearly proclaimed the "Word of the Lord," but all of these failed to administer to man's deepest need.

Then God sent His Son who "being found in fashion as a man . . . humbled himself" and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And by this life and this death man was brought into a new relationship marked by the grace of God and His loving forgiveness of sins. As St. Paul reminds us: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18).

Man's need has finally been met, not in that his great lack was taken away, but in that it had been clearly demonstrated that man could never deal with it for or by himself. The answer lies in the free gift of a God who loves us and is even more anxious than we are that we should be whole. And this

love is so great that it refuses to keep us from wrong choices, but it is also great enough to welcome us back from the error of our ways. This love is so great that, as is so often the case between a man and his wife, the lover adores the loved one so much that the thought that his love should deny freedom is most revolting. So the God who loves us allows us to turn our back on Him; leaves me free to replace Him with myself. There is sadness when I turn away, not only because true love has been rejected, but also because my own vision has been restricted. And there is joy even among the angels when I return.

Man's basic lack was met only by the death and resurrection of the Son of God. But we only come into the fullness of this divine provision in so far as we are able to die to ourselves and be new creatures. The life of loving response to God, then, is a journey which never ends in this world. It is the continued dying to self that God may be all in all. It is making progress with the transfer from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. I am born into a world which revolves around "I," and most of the human pressures I feel try to persuade me that this kind of a world is not only the most convenient, but that it is right. The struggle toward spiritual maturity is progress toward that personality which has God as its true center. It is "progress toward" rather than "fully arriving," and it is a continuous struggle rather than a high mountain-top of response which makes further effort unnecessary. And the struggle must be properly seen as a struggle to surrender rather than more and more pressure of the will being exercised in more and more places.

See how this clears the way for that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." Man's world is a battlefield littered with the chaos of destruction because it is "eccentric," so full

of devious centers that it cannot possibly be whole. I quarrel with my neighbor because he challenges my claim, usually unspoken, to command a little world of my own. He is ready to quarrel because my world makes it less and less likely that he can rule supremely in his own kingdom. But see what happens when these two lives look to the same center. This is the groundwork for true love; even greater than that love which develops when the lover gazes at the loved one, is that which grows between them as they stand side by side and adore that which is so much greater than either one of them.

"One thing thou lackest," said our Lord to the rich young man. And by demanding the disposal of his possessions, Christ asked of him the hardest thing He could have asked, not because Christ wanted to make him suffer, but because only by this could he be brought to the death that must always precede the resurrection.

Here is the reason there are so many hard words in the New Testament—burden, yoke, cross, death. Because the response to the love which is *agape* is a response that can only be made by one who, in the grace of God, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13:7).

# 4

## THE TESTING of OUR CALLING

by

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LENT is the season when the Christian Church commemorates the trial or the proving of our Lord's vocation. The minds and memories of Christians go back to the story as told in the Gospels, very starkly in Mark, more fully in Matthew and Luke. "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13, A.S.V.).

"The disciple is not greater than his master, nor is a bond-servant above his Lord." The ironic words of Jesus remind us that according to the liturgical economy of the Church, Lent is the season allotted to Christ's followers to examine their own vocation as disciples. This is not done by making or using little or long lists of virtues or sins, and then checking off one against the other. Instead, the Christian is given the opportunity to ponder the story of Christ as the embodiment of God's meaning for human life. But this story of this Person has no meaning for us unless we realize that we stand in need of it, and of Him. So first, in the Bible as in the Prayer Book, we are helped to look at ourselves as we are. In the weeks before Ash Wednesday, collect after collect reminds us of our lack of sufficiency, that "by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always



stand upright"; and we pray for "that most excellent gift of charity," knowing that we cannot achieve by ourselves that charity, that love which exceeds all knowledge, all mysteries and even the faith which can move mountains, for it is indeed a gift of God.

To take stock of ourselves and of our calling is not so much beneficial, as absolutely necessary. For religion, by its very nature, so easily can take us, as we say, "out of ourselves." We often describe some religious occasion or person or book as uplifting or inspiring. What do we mean by this description? In what way are we lifted up or "inflated," which is a word practically identical in meaning to "inspired" or "breathed-into"? What we probably mean or perhaps ought to mean is that our sights are raised and sharpened; that we somehow catch a glimpse of the ultimate meaning of life, and also that light is shed on our more immediate concerns and questions. So religion and religious experience as well as lifting us up, out of ourselves, as we may say, also bring the need of understanding and interpreting back to us. This is always the pattern of religious experience in the Bible. Man (we can think of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah) is caught up in the moment when God reveals His glory. The burning bush to Moses, the storm in the desert for Elijah, the vision in the Temple for Isaiah, all spoke of the presence of God. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17, A.S.V.). But in the setting of religious awareness comes the word of God to man, demanding response and reaction. Invariably in these Bible stories when man is confronted by the glory and the word of God, he is overcome by a sense of his own unfitness. Moses pleads that he is slow of speech and "of a slow tongue," but God asked, "Who hath made man's mouth . . . is it not I? . . . Now therefore go, and

I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak" (Exodus 4:10-12, A.S.V.). Again, Elijah is bidden to "go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus" (I Kings 19:15, A.S.V.). While Isaiah's confession of guilt, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5, A.S.V.), is regarded as the direct result of his religious experience, it is because "my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," and in the story this is followed by the purging of Isaiah's lips by the angel. Then, the commission is laid upon him, "Go, and tell this people . . ." (Isaiah 6:9, A.S.V.). The experience of God's glory; the awareness of human insufficiency revealed by that glory; the stories do not stop there. Instead, we have the further accounts of man's conversations with God about his calling, and whether he is able to fulfill that calling, but always there is the reassurance of God's sufficiency.

This is also the pattern of Christian worship. The shape of liturgical expression follows the same order: acknowledgement of God's glory and presence, confession of our sins, the promise of forgiveness, and the offering of our lives in accordance with God's will for mankind. As in the stories in the Bible, so for example in our Eucharistic Liturgy. "Lift up your hearts"; "We lift them up unto the Lord"; "We do not presume to come . . . trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies"; ". . . and here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee." The dialogue continues. The scene and the occasion change, but the interchange goes on. Man, again and again, doubts his calling and questions his fitness for that calling. On the other side the promises of God are repeated, that He would be faithful and

just, that He would be "true to Himself," as we say; true to His own character as righteousness and mercy, as truth and grace.

It is the faith of Christianity that this character of God as truth and grace was fully disclosed in the work and person of Christ. "And we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, A.S.V.). So the life in faith for the Christian is in terms of following Christ, as it was for his first Disciples. Christian worship is therefore always expressed, or should be, against the background of this example of the perfect fulfillment of God's will. Thus, with our mind and eyes set on what the Prayer Book calls "His example of godly life," we ask for "grace that we daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life."

The story of the Temptation in the wilderness sets before us the reality of our Lord's own vocational struggles. Even if the Marcan mention of the forty days in the wilderness were all we had, we might assume that Jesus spent this solitary season in question and thought about His mission and work. At such times man leaves his fellows, and has to be alone. Some questions he has to ask himself only he, or God, can answer. So the desert with its infinity of space provides the setting where the individual works out his destiny. "The starry heavens above and the moral law within." Kant's words only echo what man has known and experienced for centuries. This is the fact of his being, the singular character of human life. Although part of nature, although child of nature, man is yet alone. "And he was with the wild beasts."

In the Bible, however, man is alone yet not alone. It is the claim of faith, which declares but cannot prove, that man is created for relationship with another, with God. Created by God in love and in freedom, man is in the image and the



likeness of God. This means that he is free, and yet born to love, a destiny which, as St. Paul noted, means that he is free to work out his own salvation in fear and trembling. Love, however, implies and involves a correlative. No one can be described as loving, unless he have something or someone to love. But love cannot be exacted. The essence of love is that it is free. Man "gives" his love to another. So the New Testament and the writings of Christian theology often describe God's love for man as "grace," which is the translation of the Latin word *gratia*, meaning "a gift."

It is when he is alone that man remembers that he is not alone. Often in times of illness or need, when, apparently alone, we have to face the crisis of sickness of body or mind, we realize that we carry with us the gifts of natural or social inheritance which help us to meet the challenge of the moment. So we thank whatever gods that be that we had the "gifts" of health and upbringing which enabled us to survive and surmount the crisis.

It was the faith of Israel that God was with His people. Thus, the writer of the psalm at the end of the book of Deuteronomy describes it, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he compassed him about, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye . . . Jehovah alone did lead him" (Deuteronomy 32:10, 12, A.S.V.). The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was for them the time of trial and testing. In answer to their questions the Lord ministered to them and to their needs: "And he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." So in the New Testament Jesus undergoes a parallel period of temptation, and we are told that "the angels" who are messengers of God in the religious scheme of the Jews of the first century "ministered unto him" (Mark 1:13).



When man is thus alone, standing between the natural order and God's order, he does not always see the ladder, as Jacob did in his dream at Bethel, which is provided by faith and grace and which relates him to his heavenly destiny. Instead, sharp and piercing questions face him, and the shape of the possibilities and alternatives they raise are demonic rather than angelic. Perhaps some of us are still scared by questions, and have not thought why this should be. Questions which worry or unsettle us usually show us up in our inadequacy and ignorance. As in a school examination, we feel that we have failed because we ourselves do not know the answers or perhaps even did not understand the questions. As a result, much of our life is spent avoiding the occasions of questions. We read, we listen, but we do not catch the questions. Probably we read the Bible, but what of the questions the Bible asks? "Adam [or Man], where art thou?" . . . "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4) . . . "Lord, is it I?" Such questions which lie so close to the theme of the Bible only crowd upon us when we are alone; "What are we to do?" . . . "What should we be doing?" . . . "Why are we here?" . . . "Who am I?"

Questions such as these must have faced Jesus when He was alone in the wilderness. According to the Gospel story, these forty days were preceded by His Baptism by John. This rite, whatever other significance it had, was the outward and visible sign that He was called, set apart for His vocation and mission. This calling for which He was set apart was to do the Will of God; but surely questions must have remained for Him in spite of His acceptance of His calling? How or in what way was He to fulfill the Will of God?

When we try to understand both the shape and force of these questions which Jesus must have faced, we have to re-

member the long history of our Lord's own people in their search to know and to do the Will of God. The religious mission of Israel is in itself one of the great miracles of human history. The ancient Hebrews, a relatively uncultured and backward people, were able to project the picture and vivid sense of their God whom they had experienced and known. The Old Testament is the story of God as Holy Will, and willing Holiness for His people, in relationship to His covenant people of Israel. But in this drama of destiny, Israel (who is also Man, Everyman) seems again and again to fail because of its sin and insufficiency. The very words for "sin" in Hebrew represent various figures of speech for the violation of God's Will. Often God's Will is described as "the ways of God," in which man must "walk" if he is to do the Will of God. But his feet "slip" or he "wanders" or "errs" or "backslides," or even more positively, he "trespasses" or "transgresses," further words which suggest not only the feet which leave the right path, but those which offend by active damage off the path.

Prophet after Prophet sought to recall the people to their covenant responsibility of "walking in the way of the Lord." But Israel was, as man is also in his individual situation, free to follow other gods and to walk in other ways. So Hosea and Jeremiah speak of Israel's sin as that of adultery and desertion, terms which particularly describe deliberate betrayal of the relationship of loyalty and faith. Both these Prophets (who incidentally show interesting common terminological usage) perhaps by their choice of these metaphors describing the deepest and most interrelated of human relationships, suggest that moral behavior which is conformity to the Will of God cannot be performed according to external codes or commands, but can only result from the changed heart (which we would

call today the whole person) moving in love and gratefulness towards God whose nature and activity is steadfast love. So Hosea speaks of when Israel "will call me, 'my husband' (Ishi), and no longer will you call me, 'my master' (Baali)" (Hosea 2:16), and Jeremiah in a famous passage describes the New Covenant as written "in the heart, and in the inward parts" (Jeremiah 31:33). He saw as clearly as St. Paul later, or any psychologist or sociologist today, that unless the self is unified, so-called ethical and religious behavior is either hypocritical or conventional.

This is the "inwardness" of real religion, or what Kierkegaard called the "passionate subjectivity" of faith. Only so can heart, mind and conscience really act together. Only so can the heart move spontaneously towards the doing of the Will of God. Only so can man in his real being "know God." This is why the Great Commandment of the Jewish and Christian faith speaks of loving God "with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." So in the Prayer Book we pray for God's "people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise" (Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter).

The problem then of how to live according to the Will of God, for the Jews of old as for all of us, was not only how to know it but how really, again in the words of the Prayer Book, "to perform the same." Thus in the Old Testament there is the cry, "show us thy way," and also the recognition that this apparently and practically is impossible. "Send out thy truth and thy light that they may lead us." . . . "The way of man is not in himself" (Jeremiah 10:23). In the days of later Judaism the hope of the performance of God's Will was projected to the future, when God's Kingdom should be revealed. It was a common saying in the Rabbinic writers that if all men would



keep Torah, the Will of God, everywhere, even for one day, then the Kingdom of God would come.

Jesus inherited all these hopes and longings of Jewish piety. He also must have known the various specific forms those hopes and longings took. For hopes have to take particular shape or form, even in our thinking. This is always so in our historical existence. Thus we inherit ideas embodied in certain forms, forms that are part of the concrete social past or present, or even of a less concrete but vividly hoped-for future. Thus, we may all share ideals of equality or freedom, but may associate these ideals with very different forms of social, political or economic life. One man might assume that the very words equality or freedom are practically identical with the American form of republican government. Another might associate the same ideals with the constitutional monarchical system of Denmark or England, yet another with a perfect socialist state of the future. The man who is free from prejudice and ideological bondage can hold to his high ideals, and yet not be indissolubly committed to any specific program or policy. He must be free to be critical, as well as objective as to which historical form would best incarnate his ideals.

We see this often illustrated in the Bible. Because the Prophets in the Old Testament were so conscious of God's Will as the most important thing in life, they turned their criticism particularly upon those institutions which conventionally are associated with the service of God and the exercise of His Will, namely, the priesthood, the official Prophets, and the government. Amos delivered his message of judgment in the royal chapel of the King of Israel, and attacked both Church and State. He claimed his commission was from God Himself: "I am no prophet nor a prophet's son" (Amos 7:14, R.S.V.). Jeremiah likewise repeatedly attacked the clergy of his day,



"from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jeremiah 6:13, A.S.V.). "Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their wickedness" (Jeremiah 23:11, R.S.V.).

The Prophets were able to be critical even of the most sacrosanct institutions of their days because they were men of God. God's word came to them carrying its own validation. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8, A.S.V.). It was their faith in the absolute demands of God's will, in the word of God which came to them, which set them free from the historical conditioning of their day, and made them the critical and revolutionary preachers they were. Not that their vocation was easy for them. Jeremiah's writings particularly reveal the struggles and questions which accompanied the fulfillment of his prophetic mission. But the starting point in their lives as well as in their preaching was their relationship to God. "I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1, A.S.V.). The "Thou" of their experience was transcendent, yet actually related to history and man. "Therefore hear the word of the Lord, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne . . ." so declared the prophet Micaiah standing before Ahab the King of Israel and Jehoshaphat the King of Judah, each sitting on his throne.

When we read the story of the temptations in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we see all the accepted patterns of religious fulfillment and success put forward by the devil. These our Lord rejected. Perhaps the story is so well known that it is hard to realize how respectable are the possibilities advanced by the devil. The first temptation is the suggestion that Jesus command the stones to turn into loaves of bread. After all, quite often in the Bible God or holy men produce food because

men need it. We think of the manna in the wilderness, the feeding of the multitude, and the Johannine story of turning the water into wine. In its deeper sense, bread suggests the eternal human need of man. Christianity and Judaism have always honored the human needs of life as proper and belonging to the order of creation. Since both are sacramental religions and not "spiritual religions" they understand the relation of food to life, of flesh to spirit. What then was wrong with the suggestion of the devil?

Our Lord answered as would a good Jew. He quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy: "Man does not live by bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3). The full quotation which is found in Matthew but not in Luke gives us a clue, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Another verse in the Fourth Gospel further suggests how we should interpret this first temptation. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34, A.S.V.). Instead of taking short cuts to become a popular leader who would bring peace and plenty to His subjected people, Jesus knew that His responsibility was to the Word of God. As to the prophets of old, the Word of God for Him was the only authority. What obedience to this Word might mean is not suggested in the story here.

This same choice can confront everyone. All of us are involved in work for some justifiable end. Yet as we seek to fulfill these tangible tasks, do we not know that they are as nothing worth unless some intangible qualities or values are being incorporated and, we hope, shown forth in and by our work? Thus, as fathers and mothers we look after the physical needs of our families, trusting however that this care will generate and nurture that particular security and freedom which belongs to the real home. So also with our work in the

world. The firm or organization for which we work should be related somehow to our hopes and faith. No one really wants his or her work to be just a meal ticket, for "Man does not live by bread alone."

This is also our cry when the challenge comes to us to bear witness to what we know and feel to be right and true. In this moment it may be that we thereby lose our jobs or give up our accustomed way of life. But the choice is before us, and the decision is ours. Bread, the staff of life, is good. "Give us this day our daily bread." Why do we say this every day, and then have to be ready to throw this bread away? We describe our work and the satisfaction it brings as our meat and drink. How can we live without them? Yet as we ask this, we know that the inner direction, the motivation for our work and way of life is the really important thing. We recall all those dedicated souls in the realms of art, science, or letters, who have seemed to spurn the order and comfort of conventional existence and, true apostles of the creative word of God, have borne witness instead to another order, "where the sounded note is the restored relation."<sup>1</sup> "It is the spirit which giveth life; the flesh [which is, as the bread, the staff of life] profiteth nothing" (John 6:63, A.S.V.). These words from the Johannine Gospel proclaim the same truth. . . . "Man does not live by bread alone."

The ancient Jews, as all men everywhere before and since, had longed for one who would fill the hungry with good things. Jesus by rejecting this aspect of His vocation had stripped off some of the traditional and recurring wrappings of the destiny of the servant of God and Son of Man.

He was going even further in his reaction to the next temptation. "The devil taketh him up unto an exceeding high

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<sup>1</sup> W. H. Auden, *For the Time Being*, p. 57.



mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." So St. Matthew's Gospel (4:8-10) reads, incidentally placing this temptation last. St. Luke's account is rather different. Writing for the Gentile world of the Roman Empire he makes more explicit what is the nature of political power. "And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours" (Luke 4:5, R.S.V.). Here, the political power of the kingdoms of the world is regarded as being, as the writer of the first Epistle describes it, "in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19, R.S.V.).

It had been the hope of Israel that government might be, with God's aid, both just and pure. So the Old Testament in its historical material, as in the prophetic writings, often looks forward to the coming of the Good King upon whose shoulders should be the government, and who would be just and righteous altogether. But also in the Old Testament there is another strain, found in the historical writings as also in the Prophets such as Amos and Hosea, which is extremely critical of government. Some of the criticism was directed towards the obvious corruption of the office. There is as well, however, more than a suggestion that earthly kingship represents a rebellion against the kingship of God. "They have not rejected thee: but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them" (1 Samuel 8:7, A.S.V.). So Yahweh speaks to the prophet Samuel when the people clamor for a king. The words are propheti-



cally related to many struggles in our history between Caesar and God, between tyranny and the individual, between Church and State.

This temptation of the kingdoms and the powers stands as an eternal parable of the conflict between the way of the world and the way of God. All men seek power, for power is the outward reaching of the natural man, the extension of the ego. We can call it ambition, the power of a strong personality, executive ability, or what we will, but we can recognize it as universal and in a sense natural. For if it is lacking in someone, we feel that person is not fully developed, or has patterns of inhibition or repression. In larger and more collective terms, power can manipulate groups and individuals and change their circumstances and ways of life. In the world of politics, if power or satisfaction for one's self or group is all that is sought, then one is already worshipping the Prince of this world, or Mammon. The statesman who gains our respect is one who relates his political actions to principles of equity and integrity, and in the moment of challenge will sacrifice his political advantage to those principles. "Man cannot serve God and Mammon."

Men often have identified the temptations and exercise of power with the temporal state, with government itself or any form of institutional life, and so have sought to keep themselves unspotted from its infection. Many reforms and movements in our history have sprung from this suspicion of power. The words of the Gospel have inspired many to try to live in fraternity and equality: "Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But so shall it not be among you." (Mark 10:42-43, Matthew 20:25-26, Luke 22:25-26). The calm assertion rather than command in these last words ought to startle us more than it does. We are so used to the push and

shove of our common life, even within the community of the Church, that we regard it all as belonging to the eternal nature of things. The problem of power is not by any means restricted to what we call "the world." The household of faith provides many an example, many an occasion of the play of power. The words of our Lord, "But it shall not be so among you," do we hear them perhaps as we leave a diocesan convention, a synod meeting or any other gathering of the Church at work? Our Lord knew what these words really meant. It *is* tempting to take opportunities for the exercise of power, and opportunities often come, particularly if we are willing to pay a certain price. "If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." Jesus had faced this temptation, and in accepting His destiny as Son of Man He instead was going to exemplify the laws of God's Kingdom as described in the passage from the Old Testament which He quoted. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Deuteronomy 6:13, Luke 4:8).

It was not only the temptation to exercise power that our Lord withstood in the Gospel story. It was also the assumption that religion is power. "And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Luke 4:9-12, A.S.V.).

The other two temptations represented the lure of social achievement and political power. This temptation to use religion, to make use of religious faith, is born only out of religion itself. It is suggestive that it is to the pinnacle or corner

of the Temple that the devil leads our Lord to tempt Him there. Only on the basis of the religion consciousness does this temptation make sense. Thus, religion is often tested to see if it "works." Religion for many should be "useful," a bulwark of society and of the family, and it should be a splendid preventative against divorce, drunkenness, and juvenile delinquency. So much of this estimate seems proper and valid, yet in its essence, surely religious faith does not depend upon the valuation of its usefulness nor should it guarantee safety and success.

Some of this we know. We love, respect, and trust our family and friends. Are we not affronted if it be assumed that this love and trust will be justified only if it produce fruits? We love our children, partly because they are given us, God's gifts of grace and nature, and partly because their own individuality provokes our interest, concern, and affection. But do we expect this love of ours, imperfect as it is, to be computed as insuring that our children will care for us in our old age? Likewise with our love for and interest in our work, are not the compensations in one sense by the way? So ought we to love God and to trust Him, not as our insurance against accident, as the devil suggests, but for Himself. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Gratitude for His love in creation, for redemption and all the blessings of this life, this is the ground and motive of our love for Him.

My God, I love Thee; not because  
I hope for Heaven thereby,  
Nor yet because who love thee not  
Must die eternally.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
Or seeking a reward;  
But as Thyself hast loved me,  
O ever-loving Lord.



E'en so I love thee, and will love,  
And in thy praise will sing;  
Solely because Thou art my God  
And my eternal King.<sup>2</sup>

How right was Calvin to declare that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever." In the same vein a young happily-married woman replied to a pious questioner who hoped that the marriage was "a worth-while relationship" that she did not know about that, but she and her husband enjoyed each other and had "a helluva good time."

God is to be enjoyed and glorified, not "used." That is why there is so much praise, adoration, and thanksgiving in all Christian worship. Even with prayers of intercession and petition the recurrence of the Gloria serves to remind us that this should be the central emphasis of worship. Yet in spite of this our religion often seems interested in making God "useful" in one way or another, either as a means to some other end, or as insurance, as prophylactic or as power.

Religion *is* power according to many popular explanations either of today or any other time. The titles and the appeal of much contemporary religious literature are gaged to the longing in man for power to control his destiny. More than echoes of it are heard from Christian pulpits and are expressed in prayer and pious meditation. We are told that if we love God and say our prayers we will make ourselves more productive or more peaceful or more powerful to achieve what we want in our situation. Religion is the substance of the "power of positive thinking" in one interpretation very popular today. In another, equally popular, religion is the power which produces "peace of mind." After reading much of this literature which ex-

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<sup>2</sup> Spanish, sixteenth century. Attributed to St. Francis Xavier.



plains religion as the power to do this or that, the Gospel story seems very odd and even perverse. How stupid, how incredibly stupid Jesus seems in contrast to the enlightened preachers of the How-to-Attain-Power School! Why did Jesus, for example, not follow the advice of a well-known New York preacher and "utilize the technique of faith and so solve all His problems"? Surely our Lord should have heeded the question in the advertisement for this preacher's best seller, "Are you missing the Life of Success?" The story of the temptations is the prologue to a story which runs counter to all success stories. Perhaps we are so blinded and deafened by the repetitions of "Find God and succeed," that we need anew to understand what is meant by the scandal of the Cross. The word scandal originally meant a trap or a catch. There *is* a catch in the Gospel. For although it speaks to our need and to our condition, it yet comes from beyond our own standards. "God's moral arithmetic is quite different from ours," so Professor Moses Hadas of Columbia University once remarked when speaking of the book of Job. God's ways are not as our ways and yet so often we want to assume they are.

The season of Lent comes to us as a blessed time to ask ourselves some searching questions about our understanding of our Lord and His Gospel, as well as about ourselves. We should listen perhaps to some of His own questions. "Who say ye that I am?" (Mark 8:29, A.S.V.). We may answer as did St. Peter, "The Christ" (the anointed one), but also as did St. Peter, we may seek to clothe that office and destiny in rather tawdry wrappings of our own preconceptions about power, about success. If we do, let us pray that we hear our Lord's rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men" (Mark 8:33, A.S.V.). It may have been at that very moment that our Lord's mind went back to the

struggle of the temptation. "Get thee behind me, Satan;" . . . "And the Devil tempted him saying. . . ."

This is part of the "Scandal," the "catch" or "snare" of the Gospel, that so often it is the followers of the Lord who seem to be on the side of the devil. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven"! (Matthew 7:21, A.S.V.). Everyone who would follow Christ has to meet the same temptations, the same testing of his witness to the will of God. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" The question declares our destiny even as it implies the failure of our intention. But in our failure lies our hope. For then we turn to God for grace, "not trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies."

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified; Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer, Collect for the Monday before Easter).

# 5

## VISIBLE and INVISIBLE

*by*

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THIS chapter might well be headed "How To Become a Christian." The two sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation together make up the way in which we are initiated into the Christian Church and come to share in all the privileges and responsibilities which that involves. There is no subject more suitable for us to think of during Lent. One excellent way to deepen our spiritual life is to ask ourselves what it means to be a Christian and to examine our own lives in the light of our answer to that question. We shall find that the whole meaning of the Christian way of life is very closely linked up with these two sacraments, with what they do to us, and with the obligations they lay upon us.

There is another very good reason for linking these two sacraments with the season of Lent and Easter. From very early times Easter was the normal time for administering Baptism and Confirmation, especially in the case of adults, so that they could share in celebrating the festival of the Resurrection. The final preparation of the Catechumens, as they were called, took place during the previous weeks. This was the way in which the season of Lent originated. Later it became associated with the final stages of penance undergone by those who were

under the Church's discipline for serious sin so that they might be restored to the Church's communion at Easter. Still later the season became connected with our Lord's fasting and temptation, and became a season of fasting and self-discipline for Christians in general. But in the beginning it was the time during which, by prayer and fasting and instruction, new converts were prepared for the final step. On the day before Easter a long and solemn series of services was held lasting almost continuously till dawn on Easter morning. The central rites were simple and impressive. The candidate was taken to the riverside. There he made a public and threefold renunciation of Satan and a threefold profession of faith. He was then immersed three times in the river, once in the Name of each Person of the Trinity. Then, clothed in a white robe he was escorted to the church where he was received by the Bishop who anointed him with oil, laid his hands on him and signed him with the Cross. The Easter Eucharist followed at which the new Christian made his first Communion. There were often many other symbolic acts and elaborate ceremonies which accompanied these rites, but the three main stages were plain. They correspond in all their main features to what we call Baptism, Confirmation, and first Communion. In our day it is seldom that they are all administered together. But it is useful to remember their close connection in early times and their association with Easter. It will help to remind us of some aspects of their meaning which we may be in danger of overlooking.

Before we go on to consider Baptism and Confirmation themselves, it may be useful to ask ourselves what we mean by this word "sacrament" and why we put such a stress upon these rites as an essential part of the Christian way of life.

The Prayer Book Catechism defines a sacrament as "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." That



is, in every sacrament there are two parts. There is something outward and visible, something we can see or touch or hear. But along with this there is something inward and spiritual, the presence and power of God acting upon us through the outward and visible sign. This presence and power of God we call in religious language His "grace." When we put it in this way sacraments seem like something strange and artificial, a peculiar part of the religious system of things, without very much connection with our ordinary ways of thinking and acting. And if, as many people do, we think of religion as being concerned with a "spiritual" world of thoughts and feelings and motives, we shall think it rather strange and inconsistent that so much emphasis should be put upon something that is outward and visible and "material." And there are many religions, and even some forms of Christianity, which do take this attitude. Real religion, they say, is concerned with man's spirit. A spiritual religion will have as little to do with the material world as possible. Outward forms, our material bodies, and all the rest of this visible world are a hindrance to those who are trying to rise above such things into the real world. The great eastern religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, regard the material world as an illusion and the source of error. The way of salvation lies in withdrawing from contact with the world, in the soul's release from entanglement in the body. Even Christians have sometimes been tempted to fall into this trap. Christian Science says that matter is an illusion, and that evil comes from the error of supposing that our bodies and the material world are real. Puritans of all kinds have regarded the material world as real enough, but as somehow evil and a source of danger and temptation. So they frowned on all the outward side of religion. They stripped their churches of all ceremonial and color and symbolism. They taught men to suspect something

sinful in the enjoyment of pleasures that came through the bodily senses. In religions which take this point of view sacraments have not much place.

But orthodox Christianity has never accepted these points of view. Archbishop Temple once said that Christianity is the most materialistic of all religions. In saying this he meant that over against these purely "spiritual" religions our Christian faith affirms that the material world, including the life of our bodies, is real and good. Far from matter being imaginary or opposed to spirit, it was created and used by God as the outward and visible sign and instrument of the inward and spiritual. The two belong together as partners. In contrast to purely material or purely spiritual points of view which deny one or the other aspect of the real world, Christianity accepts both as real and good. The sacramental principle runs all through God's creation. It is unnatural except as an abstraction of thought to separate them. The outward and visible is the sacrament of the inward and spiritual.

This sacramental view of the relation between the spiritual and material worlds is based on the Christian doctrine of God. The Apostles' Creed is a simple and convenient summary of what Christians believe about God. There we are taught to believe in God the Father who created the world, in His Son Jesus Christ who became Man to redeem us, and in the Holy Spirit who works through His Church to make us holy.

God made the world and all that is in it. In the poem of creation with which the Bible opens we are told that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Man's body as well as his spirit is included in this creation. If God created this world then it is a real world and it has a place in His purposes. It is no illusion nor something

we can ignore in favor of some higher reality. And if God created the world, then it is not an evil thing or the source of evil, but a good thing which is meant to be used and enjoyed in accordance with the purposes for which He made it. There is no idea in the Bible that man is a spiritual being who has somehow become entangled in a foreign substance from which he must struggle to be free. Christian teaching is so emphatic that man's bodily nature as well as his spirit are both part of his life as created by God that it even maintains that in some mysterious way his body as well as his spirit will share in his final glorious destiny. "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

The creation of the world by God is the basis of the sacramental principle. But it is in man's own nature that we first see it clearly exemplified. Man's body is the sacrament of his spirit, that is, it is the outward and visible sign of what is inward and spiritual. It is the instrument through which man's spirit expresses itself and communicates with other beings. How else do we reach out to other people, become conscious of their presence, express our thoughts and feelings to them, receive from them the influences through which we grow from childhood to maturity, than through this outward world of which our bodies are a part? And if God created us like this, what is more natural than that He should use the same method in dealing with us? What is more likely than that He should manifest His presence and His grace to us in outward and visible ways which we can grasp through our bodily senses?

Jesus Christ became Man in order to redeem us. The Incarnation is the supreme example of a sacrament. Every man can be called a sacrament in the sense that his body is the outward and visible sign of his invisible spirit which dwells within the body and uses it as its instrument. But in Jesus Christ it is



God who is the inward unseen Reality who manifests His presence among men and His love and power under the outward and visible form of a human life and a human body. God Himself has come down to reveal Himself to men and to save them. But He has done so in a genuine human life. God comes to us as no stranger, but accommodating Himself to our human bodily condition. Our Lord is truly Man as well as truly God. The Gospels stress the reality of His human nature. He increased in wisdom and stature like any other child. He earned food for His body by the labors of His hands. He experienced temptation, sorrow, pain, and death. God does not call us to separate ourselves from the common, earthly, material things of our human life in order to find Him in some mysterious inner fashion. He comes down and meets us in them, and through them communicates to us the good news of His love and healing presence.

Nor did our Lord in His ministry to men use some mysterious spiritual method of conveying His help to those in need. When He healed the sick He laid His hands upon them; He anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay; He forgave the sins of the paralytic with the words "Thy sins be forgiven thee." His ministry was a sacramental one given through outward and visible signs. It was given through the human nature which He had taken upon Himself, in ways suited to the nature of the men and women He came to help, suited to that nature which God had created in them, where the body is the outward and visible sign of the unseen inward spirit.

It would surely be an extraordinary thing if after all this preparation through the creation of an outward and visible world, the creation of man as a union of body and soul, and the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, we should now discover that God had abandoned this method and had reverted to some



purely "spiritual" method of dealing with men. There is no reason for us to think that this is the case. In the Apostles' Creed belief in the Holy Spirit is linked immediately with belief in the Holy Catholic Church. Here is the same connection between the inward and spiritual and the outward and visible. No one will deny, of course, that God's Spirit often works in mysterious and unpredictable ways. But if we are right in regarding the sacramental method as God's normal way of dealing with us we shall not be surprised to find that His presence and activity in the world normally manifest themselves in an outward and visible institution, which works through outward and visible means, the *sacraments* in the technical sense of the word. This is so clearly analogous to God's way of working through Christ that the Church has been called the "Extension of the Incarnation." St. Paul calls it the "Body of Christ." He uses this metaphor to teach the reality of our union with Christ and with one another, and the need of our working together in unity, each one performing the function to which God has called him. But behind these thoughts lies the thought of the Church as an organism which is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and is under His direction, and is the normal instrument of His activity and saving power. It is significant that our union with this body is associated by St. Paul with the two great sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. "By one Spirit ye are all baptized into one body." "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." The idea of the Church and its working in the New Testament is a thoroughly sacramental one.

This conception of the Church as a visible historical institution which is yet the sacramental organ of the presence and activity of Christ is challenged by some who are offended by the idea that the "Body of Christ" could be composed of human

and fallible individuals. They attempt to see the "true Church" as an invisible spiritual fellowship of those whose faith and life is consistent with their profession. Such an attempt is clearly a delusion. It seems to be partly dependent upon the same sort of presupposition which leads many to regard anything outward and visible as suspicious from a spiritual point of view. That is, it tacitly rejects the whole sacramental work. Nor is it easy to see the value of the idea of the Church if it is composed of those who are known only to God. An "invisible Church" like an invisible body is a contradiction in terms. It is of the nature of a Church, as of a body, that it is the outward and visible sign in which the invisible Spirit dwells and works. God's Spirit can effect His purposes in spite of and even through the mistakes and imperfections of the members of His Body.

The sacramental principle, then, which we have traced back to God's creation of the world, to man's nature as a unity of body and spirit, and to God's method of effecting our redemption in the incarnation of His Son, is continued through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This means that the Church's sacramental acts are not mere symbols to teach us or to remind us of something. They are the hand or voice of our invisible Lord touching us and speaking to us through His visible body. When we bring our children to Baptism we can see and hear what is done outwardly and visibly. There is the priest and water and spoken words. The inward and spiritual reality which we know by faith is our Lord's taking the children into His arms, blessing them and making them His own as truly as He did in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago in His human body. In Confirmation it is Christ's hands which are placed on our heads in blessing. He pronounces the words of forgiveness in Absolution. The sacraments are the organs of Christ's Body, the outward and visible means through which

He communicates His presence and power to us, as truly and directly as He conveyed them to men through flesh and blood during His life on earth.

In order to understand the sacraments it has been necessary to discuss the way in which the basic principle behind them corresponds to God's actions and to man's nature. Only so can we avoid the dangers that lie on either side, of magnifying the material world at the expense of the spiritual, or of seeking a spiritual realm by denying the reality or goodness of God's material creation. Only the sacramental view gives each its due place.

But there is another danger into which religious people are liable to fall, the danger of excessive individualism. A right understanding of the sacraments will help us to avoid this. How often we hear people say that their religion is a matter that concerns only themselves and God. It is a purely personal, private affair between a man and his Maker. This individualistic approach to religion is encouraged by some evangelistic forms of Christianity which regard the essence of real religion as my acceptance of Christ as "*my* personal Saviour," or which stress that Christ died for each one individually. In so far as these statements mean that our religion must be more than an outward form to which we give a conventional assent, that it must involve a personal act of trust and committal, they are in the right. But if they imply that our religion is purely a private affair they are misleading. Such individualism is not confined to any one group or party. It is a constant danger. How many people love the early Communion because they feel that there they can pursue their private devotions with the least disturbance or distraction from the presence of others? There is a lack of understanding of the way in which Holy *Communion* involves us in fellowship with others as well as with God.



Here again we find the principles by which we must worship and live based upon the nature of the God in whom we believe. Christians do not believe that religion is a "flight of the alone to the Alone." God Himself is no solitary individual. He is a Trinity of three Persons in one God. We cannot here go into a long theological discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine arose historically out of a threefold experience of God in Jewish history, in the incarnate Christ, and in the transforming power of the Spirit in the Church. It was formulated to safeguard the Church's faith against those who so stressed the unity of God that they denied the reality of Christian experience of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and against those who destroyed the unity of God by elevating the three Persons into separate individuals. The doctrine of the Trinity is not intended to be a description or explanation of God. God remains a mystery. But this formulation of the mystery does throw light on many other sides of our religious life and beliefs. In revealing that even within God's own being there is the possibility of social relationships, it gives a basis for our belief that God's own nature is love. For how can there be love in God unless there is love and self-giving within God's own nature? And the possibility of love and social relationships in man is seen, not as something which God, so to speak, invented when He created man, but a reflection of His own nature. Here we see one aspect of the profound truth proclaimed in Genesis that "God created man in his own image."

The conception of man, not as a pure individual, but as one who finds his highest fulfillment in love and fellowship with other men, is witnessed to in every aspect of his life, in the family, the tribe, and the nation, and in the gropings after a universal human fellowship. "It is not good for man to be alone," says God in Genesis. It is this inherent part of human



nature which is recognized by the existence of the Church. The Church is intended to be the perfect society in which all men may eventually find complete fulfillment not only of their personal needs, but of their need for fellowship with God and their neighbors. This is a part again of what St. Paul is trying to emphasize in calling the Church the Body of Christ. As a body has many individual members, and the health or sickness of each one is felt by all, so we are bound together in one community in Christ. There is an inward aspect of that unity in the love and fellowship which each member is bound to exercise towards the others. But it is expressed and effected in an outward and visible way in the whole sacramental life of the Church. Baptism and the Eucharist express it most plainly, but it is a strong element in all the other sacraments. These, though always personal and individual, have their full meaning only within the fellowship of the Church. The Church as the Body of Christ, and the sacraments of the Church, not only bring us into communion with Him, but bind us in fellowship with one another.

Baptism is the first of the Church's sacraments, and in a real sense the most important of them all. It is the sacrament of admission into the fellowship of the Church, that community which is itself the sacrament of our union with Christ and with one another.

In the New Testament, Baptism is administered with water as the outward visible instrument. It is not very clear whether it was by immersion or by pouring. Probably it was done in either way as circumstances might dictate. Our Lord was baptized by John in the river Jordan. So too was the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip. But other cases are recorded such as that of the jailor at Philippi in the middle of the night, where immersion was probably impossible. If later tradition can be

trusted, the probability is that immersion was preferred as most expressive of the inner meaning of the rite, but that pouring of water over the head was used when necessary, with no thought of its being less effective. Along with the water, words were used to indicate that Baptism was being given "in the Name of the Lord," or "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Both forms are found in the New Testament, but probably the more elaborate form is later and soon came to supersede the other entirely. These words with the water constitute the "outward and visible signs" in Baptism.

The inward and spiritual effects of Baptism are described in the New Testament under a wealth of metaphor and imagery. It is a death to sin and rising again to a new life. It is a regeneration or new birth. It is a washing away of sin. Through it believers are endued with the Holy Spirit, by whom they are sealed or stamped as belonging to Christ. They become members of Christ's Body and citizens of God's Kingdom.

The Church Catechism includes these effects under three main headings. In Baptism I am made "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Here the Church is referred to under three metaphors which illustrate different aspects of the spiritual benefits obtained by membership in Christ's Church.

To be a member of Christ is to think of the Church under the metaphor of the Body of Christ, of which we are members. It is a biological metaphor which well expresses the closeness of our union with Him, and the need of maintaining that union if we are to be live and healthy members. St. Paul has a favorite phrase to describe how closely we are united to Christ and are identified with Him. Christians are those who are "in Christ." The same idea is expressed by St. John in the Parable of the Vine and the Branches. Like all metaphors it

conveys to the imagination thoughts that are too deep to be expressed in a mere verbal description. There is an element of Christian mysticism here. The separateness of our individual personalities is transcended and we move out into a wider and more comprehensive life than we could ever attain by ourselves. As body and spirit are one person, so we as members of Christ's Body are taken up into His life and identified with Him. St. Paul carries the metaphor to its logical conclusion. If we are members of His Body, then we share in all that happened to His Body. So, being made His members, we have died and been buried and have risen with Him to a new life.

To be a member of Christ teaches us next how closely we depend upon others. For our union with them and identity with them is as close as with our Lord. In fact it is only as they minister to us that our union with Christ can be maintained. And our failure can hinder them from realizing what their own membership in the Body should mean. We can see how when we help or hurt one another we are serving or injuring Christ Himself, with whom each individual, humble or great, of whatever color, rank, or talents, is identified. Our Lord's words spring to mind, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But perhaps most important of all, the sense that we are made members of Christ's Body in Baptism will help us to avoid that deadliest of all religious sins, the self-centeredness to which we are all prone. The most common error of religious people is to suppose that sacrament and prayer and other religious activities are primarily to benefit us. Our union with Christ and with one another in His Body does of course bring us new life and strength as individuals and lays the foundation of enduring personal peace and fulfillment. But this is its by-product. The spirit does not exist to minister to the



body's needs and wishes, but the reverse. The Body of Christ exists to minister to Him, and to be an instrument to fulfill His will. And every one of us as members of that Body is given life and strength so that we may play our proper part in the life of the whole, and make of His Body a perfect instrument for the service of His will. In this conception is contained the mission of the Church and the vocation of each one of us according to our particular talents and station. We are united with Christ through His Body in order that we may share in His redeeming life and work, and manifest God's presence and grace to the world around.

Baptism is next described as making us "the child of God." Here the Church is thought of as a Family in which God is Father and we are brothers to one another. In many ways this metaphor emphasizes the same things as that of the Body, but in a more personal and ethical manner. There is more stress on the individuality of the members, and it is easier to see that their relation to the Father and to one another is one of love and personal response. But our weak modern concept of the unity of the family does not give us the same sense that the members exist to carry out the Father's will. The idea of regeneration or new birth in Baptism fits naturally into the framework of the Church as the Family of God. Birth is the beginning of a new life. There are some who object to associating the new birth with Baptism. They think of regeneration as a sudden miraculous change of personality under the inward power of the Holy Spirit which sweeps away old habits and desires and creates a new man. But such people misunderstand the meaning of birth. Birth is not the completion of a new life, but its beginning. The newborn child has all its learning and development before it. It is in the life of the family that this takes place, and it is a process which is never finished. If the



Church is the Family of God into which the newly-baptized person is born, then it is obvious that to obtain the full benefits of what has been done he must be brought up within the family. There is no magic in Baptism nor in the idea of the new birth which is associated with it. Yet many people are content to have their children "done" with no thought that any other obligation is entailed. Others are content to send their children off to Sunday School or special children's "worship services." For themselves they are satisfied with occasional conformity at Christmas and Easter and other special occasions. These are not an adequate expression of what Baptism should mean either to a child or an adult. Nothing less than participation in the whole life and activity of God's Family is implied in our Baptism. To neglect prayer and Holy Communion is as though in our home life we refused to speak or eat with our parents or other members of the family. Any child should learn to share in the work and contribute his share toward the expenses of the home. In such participation and in sharing the family habits and traditions, his own life will be moulded and shaped to maturity. All such considerations have a natural analogy in the life of God's Family and involve us in similar obligations.

Objection is sometimes taken to the Baptism of children on the ground that we have no right to lay them under obligations which they may repudiate later. Or it may be said that they ought to wait until they are old enough to choose for themselves, and that we ought to require them to show the right disposition before admitting them. A little reflection will show the fallacy of these objections. Their absurdity is plain if we try to apply the same principles to ordinary human birth. Actually, the dispositions which fit us to be children of God can only be adequately learned by living in the Family. Nor is

the child being unfairly subjected to obligations which do not apply to others. He is only being brought into an environment where he may learn the obligations he is already under as a creature of God, and where he will find the fellowship and the means of grace which will enable him to fulfill them. Nor do parents refuse to bring children into the world because the child has no personal choice in the matter. Normal parents know that the gift of life with all its possibilities and the environment of love which their home provides are treasures which their children will value as they did before them. Life as a child of God and membership in the Family of God, surrounded by His love and guidance, is a benefit of which no parent who has experienced them and knows their value would dream of depriving his children.

Finally, Baptism makes us "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." Here the Church is represented as a nation, as the people of God. We are citizens of the Kingdom of which He is the King. This Kingdom stands in contrast to "the kingdoms of this world," to all the other purposes and ideals to which men give their allegiance. The world is seen as largely in rebellion against its rightful Lord. By our natural birth we belong to this world and are involved in its rebellion and ruin. Our Baptism is the repudiation of our old allegiance and our taking out of citizenship papers in our true fatherland. By this transfer of allegiance, we are freed from our responsibility for the past, and start with a clean record. Here meaning is given to the idea that Baptism is a washing away of sin, an idea obviously symbolized in the water. In this world we live as foreigners, a kind of fifth column, a subversive element working for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. We pray "Thy Kingdom come." As inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven we are bound to carry Christ's standard into every department of

life, home, business, social, political, international, until "the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

There is still another important gift which is linked with Baptism in the New Testament, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of God and of Christ, who links the whole fellowship together, and gives life and strength to the individual life. There is no doubt that this is associated with Baptism in many significant texts. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Here the gift of the Spirit is regarded as the inward grace of which the water is the outward and visible sign. Again, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Yet in other places it is apparent that Baptism has been administered, but that those baptized have not yet received the Spirit.

This gift is associated with another sacramental rite, the laying on of the hands of one of the Apostles, who comes down specially for that purpose. This corresponds to the sacrament of Confirmation. Normally, Baptism is administered in infancy. Confirmation is administered at a later age by the Bishop. Its inward gift is the Holy Spirit, and it is a step which admits the newly-confirmed person to the full privileges and responsibilities of adult membership in the Church. Especially, it is required before admission to Holy Communion.

But there is an apparent discrepancy here in the New Testament accounts, and it has given rise to a controversy among scholars and theologians; is the gift of the Holy Spirit attached to Baptism or to Confirmation? The controversy is not without importance. There are those who regard Baptism in water as the essential sacrament of initiation which confers all the benefits of membership in the Body of Christ including the full gift of the Spirit. These regard Confirmation as an edifying rite. It



confers a *special* gift and commission of the Spirit, equipping the Christian for his work of witness to Christ, a kind of ordination as a lay missionary. But it is not absolutely essential, and its requirement as a preliminary to Communion is only a disciplinary one. It may be waived if some "equivalent" ceremony has been undergone. There is clearly present here, along with a definite point of view with regard to Biblical and theological interpretation, a strong "ecumenical" motive. Those who take this position would like to give full recognition to Christians of Protestant denominations as full members of the Body of Christ.

Others, however, believe that the evidence of the New Testament and the early history of the Church shows that Confirmation is an essential part of the one sacrament of initiation. Until it is completed the candidate is only in a qualified sense a member of the Church. He still lacks the full gift of the Spirit which is the most important inward aspect of membership in the Church. And he lacks the union with the whole Body of Christ, of which unity the Bishop is the center and sacramental instrument. Consequently Confirmation should always normally precede first Communion. The tendency in this case is almost to regard Baptism as a mere formal preliminary or qualification for Confirmation. It must be admitted that much of our Anglican practice tends unconsciously to follow this pattern. Baptism is often administered with little preparation to children or adults. There is little attempt made to see that those who take part really intend to keep their obligations. The service is usually performed in a semi-private fashion with only the immediate friends and family present, and with a minimum of ceremonial. Confirmation, on the other hand, is preceded by weeks or months of teaching and preparation. Candidates are often carefully screened. It is usually a public



service and accompanied with imposing ceremonial. With our increasing stress on the importance of sacramental Communion, Confirmation has also had a reflected significance as a necessary preliminary step. Yet, as we have seen, there are significant passages in the New Testament which seem clearly to connect Baptism with the gift of the Spirit. Its supreme importance is clearly stressed by words attributed to our Lord Himself. And our Prayer Book is quite clear that Baptism is one of the two sacraments "generally necessary to salvation," while Confirmation is included in the lesser rites "commonly called sacraments."

Where eminent scholars differ, the rest of us should perhaps remain silent. The controversy makes little practical difference in the use and understanding of the two sacraments in ordinary parish life. It will help us to see this if we trace how our modern separation of the two probably came about.

It seems probable that Baptism never was the mere bare rite of immersion in water with a few accompanying words which we sometimes take for granted. The New Testament does not go into liturgical details about any of the services or sacraments. Such things would be taken for granted as familiar to the reader. We can only surmise on the basis of scattered hints. We do know that John's baptism was preceded by a confession of sin, and Christian Baptism probably included a profession of faith, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. We know that any bath in eastern countries was normally followed by an anointing of the body with oil. It would surely be natural, if not inevitable, that immediately after the Baptism the chief officer of the Church present should welcome and bless the new Christian with some suitable gesture, such as the common and familiar one of laying his hands upon the head. In any case, we know that at least by the end of the second century the rite of Baptism did include all these steps and others as well. The

candidate made a threefold renunciation of sin and a threefold profession of faith in the name of each Person of the Trinity, of which the Apostles' Creed is a very early example. He was then immersed three times in the name of the Trinity. Coming out of the water and clothed in a clean white garment, the candidate was received by the Bishop who anointed him with oil and signed him with the Cross, usually accompanying this with a laying on of his hands in welcome and blessing. At the Eucharist which followed, the newly-baptized offered his gifts with the others and made his first Communion. In this single rite, three stages came to be distinguished which eventually became separated into three distinct events. The first was the Baptism in water with its accompanying renunciation and profession of faith. This was often performed by one of the lesser clergy even when a Bishop was present. The second stage revolved around the ceremonies which the Bishop always performed himself, the anointing with oil, the signing and laying on of hands. The third was the partaking of the Eucharist.

Now it is a natural tendency with most religious people to try to attach some symbolic meaning to every action in a religious rite, even where some act may have been purely utilitarian in origin. In this case the symbolism lay ready to hand. There was the negative side of what was done, the washing away of sin symbolized in the water. And there was the positive reception of the Spirit. This was aptly symbolized by the anointing with oil, and to a lesser extent by the laying on of hands. Here a natural parallel with the life of Christ was found. For after His Baptism by John, He came up out of the water and received the Holy Spirit. His title of "Christ" means the Anointed One, and Christians were so called after Him. There are several references in the New Testament to the unction or anointing with the Spirit which Christians have re-

ceived. It is quite possible that this is due to the reflection of Christians at this early time on a ceremony actually performed in Baptism. A similar parallel was found in the sequence of events of the death and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit. As the immersion of water was the Christian's mystical way of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, so it was followed by a mystical sharing in the gift of the Spirit. Thus when for practical reasons the one original service was separated into two parts, the separate significance to be attached to each lay ready at hand.

There is a danger in trying to distinguish too sharply between the two parts of what was originally one sacrament of initiation and apportion the effects between them. No one would deny that there is a presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in both. Normally both will be received. Receiving both in penitence and faith we can be confident that we have received all the qualifications we require for our full life as God's children in Christ's Body, His Family, His Kingdom. Most people today feel that Baptism should be given a more prominent place in the public life of the Church. While we celebrate it in our present casual way, setting it apart from the life of the congregation, it is no wonder that many treat their Baptism and their obligation to the Church lightly. We could well use more vivid and expressive ceremonial. At the same time, no one would want to lose the opportunity for instruction and training which Confirmation gives. If in our teaching we lay greater emphasis on the primitive conception that Baptism and Confirmation are really parts of a single sacramental act which has for its total purpose the gathering of the believer into the full redeeming fellowship and activity of the Body of Christ, most of our difficulties of emphasis and interpretation will be transcended.



# 6

## SACRAMENT and SACRIFICE

*by*

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THE faith of the Church is a priceless gift given to us by God. The Church treasures it as we would a precious jewel. In fact, the faith of the Church is like a valuable jewel with many facets which gleam with dazzling light and breathtaking blends of color, according to the way we view it. To view the beauty and appraise the value of the whole gem at once is impossible. Each facet, examined individually, will give its own peculiar variety of light and color and will contribute in its own particular way to the value of the entire stone. So it is with the faith of the Church. There are many facets through which the beauty and truth of the Christian faith may be discerned. None will more enable the Christian to experience the living power of the Church's faith than the great central act of corporate Christian worship, which is the Eucharist.

Within the Anglican Communion it is certainly true that all too often faithful churchgoers have great difficulty in orienting their Eucharistic worship to the faith of the Church. It is not surprising to discover that, for them, Eucharistic worship has little relevance to their daily living. Certainly this can be



true only because they are able to see little connection between what happens in the Eucharist and what happened on Calvary nineteen centuries ago.

From the beginning of the Church's life, before New Testament writings became a source of information, Christians knew the significance of our Lord's redemptive life and death through Eucharistic worship. Through participation in the Eucharist, the atoning death of Christ on the cross became for them the sacrifice that He made in order that they might be reconciled to God. The power of this conviction was constantly regenerated and deepened through the Eucharist. For it was in the Eucharist that the whole community of worshipping Christians continually recalled the sacrifice of the death of Christ and shared in its redemptive benefits. It was Christ, sacramentally present in the Eucharist as crucified and as offered, as risen and as ascended, who brought the Christian community into an intimate, personal relationship with Himself and fed them through and with His sacramental presence. This great liturgical action of the Christian community, as it re-dramatizes and re-presents the sacrifice of Calvary in the Eucharist and is distributed and applied sacramentally to the receivers, has been from the beginning of the Church's life the central act of corporate worship for the Christian community. This act of the Christian community assembled in Eucharistic worship to recall and to present before God His sacrifice, and to be themselves offered up in sacrifice through union with Him, is called the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Through the sacrificial action in the Eucharist, the Church moves toward an ever-widening understanding of the sacrifice of Calvary and therefore of the Atonement. For Calvary is the very heart of the Atonement.

Since the Reformation there has been great caution exercised in teaching the Doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice within the

Anglican Communion. Overtones of the Reformer's exaggerated, though justified, fear of falling into the errors which had enveloped the sacrifice of the Mass of Medieval Scholasticism have undoubtedly been the cause for the extreme reticence within Anglicanism to stress this doctrine in its teaching. Every notion of sacrifice, in fact, the very term sacrifice, used in connection with the Eucharist, was repugnant to the Continental Reformers because of its identification with the conception of propitiatory sacrifice. The Church has continued to be sensitive to the danger of making a false identification or association in her teaching between the Anglican conception of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass of Medieval Scholasticism. The exaggerated caution exercised by the early Anglican Fathers in the Reformation era, which resulted in a truncated conception of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, was quickly corrected by the great seventeenth-century Anglican Divines. They renewed the ancient conception of the sacrifice in the Eucharist. Yet they did not compromise it by the accretions and other distortions of medieval scholastic thought. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, one of Anglicanism's saints and scholars, whose high concept of the nature of the Church and of the Eucharist is representative of the seventeenth-century Divines, declared:

1. The Eucharist ever was, and by us is, considered both as a sacrament and as a sacrifice. 2. A sacrifice is proper and applicable only to Divine worship. 3. The sacrifice of Christ's Death did succeed to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. 4. The sacrifice of Christ's death is available for present, absent, living, dead . . . (yea, for them that are yet unborn). 5. When we say the dead, we mean it is available for the Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors, and All. (Because we are all members of one body): These no man will deny. If we agree about the matter of sacrifice, there will be no difference about the altar. The Holy Eucharist

being considered as a sacrifice (in the representation of the breaking of bread and pouring forth the cup) the same is fitly called an altar, which again is as fitly called a table. The Eucharist being considered as a sacrament, which is nothing else but a distribution and an application of the sacrifice to the several receivers.

Innumerable illustrious scholars could be quoted as representatives of Anglican thought in the various eras during which the conception of the Eucharistic Sacrifice was enlarged. For our immediate concern let it suffice that we accept as our own point of departure the definition given to the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the reply of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (Temple and Maclagan) to Pope Leo XIII's *Apostolicae Curae* in 1896.

The Archbishops in their reply to the opinion of Rome that the Church of England teaches a doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice that is no more than a "nude commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross" asserted:

We truly teach the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. . . . But we think it sufficient in the liturgy we use in celebrating the Holy Eucharist—while lifting up our hearts to the Lord, and when now consecrating the gifts already offered that they may become to us the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ—to signify the sacrifice which is offered at that point of the service in such terms as these.

We continue a perpetual memory of the precious death of Christ, who is our Advocate with the Father and the propitiation for our sins, according to His precept until His coming again. For first we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; then next we plead and re-present before the Father the sacrifice of the cross, and by it we confidently entreat remission of sins and all other benefits of our Lord's passion for all the whole Church; And lastly we offer the sacrifice of ourselves to the creator of all things, which we have already signified by the oblations of His creatures. This whole action, in which the people has necessarily to take its part with the priest, we are accustomed to call the Eucharistic Sacrifice.



No synod of the Anglican Church has ever dissented from this.

The definition given by the Archbishops makes it clear that the sacrifice offered in the Eucharist is signified by its sequence of action and thought, especially that of the great Eucharistic or Consecration Prayer. It is the view of this author that the rationale of the great Eucharistic Prayer in the American Prayer Book sets forth indisputably the conception of the Eucharistic Sacrifice which basically agrees with that of the primitive Church.

Before considering in detail the sequence of sacrificial thought and action in the great Eucharistic Prayer several things should be said about this prayer. We find upon our own examination of it that the intention of the Church to offer sacrifice is more implicit in the prayer than explicit. The guarded wording and phraseology are indicative of how reluctant the Reformers were to articulate any conception of sacrifice that could in any way be interpreted as propitiatory or as a repetition of or addition to the sacrifice on Calvary. Likewise, the rationale of the liturgy reflects the adroit effort to avoid any conception of a propitiatory sacrifice in the Eucharist.

The Eucharistic Prayer is so pointedly explicit that it is almost redundant in its affirmation that the sacrifice of the cross alone is the only, true, proper sacrifice which is propitiatory for the sins of mankind. All other sacrifices are acceptable and applicatory to this propitiation. In the words of Bishop Buckebridge,

"It is the only sacrifice, one in itself, and once only offered, that purchased redemption; and if redemption be eternal, there is no further need that it should be offered more than once, when once is all-sufficient."

This then is the true sacrifice. All others are but types and



representations of the sacrifice which alone makes all other sacrifices and sacrificers acceptable.

The great Eucharistic Prayer leaves no doubt of the all-sufficiency and oneness of the sacrifice of Golgotha, free from any concept of a repetition or additional act of propitiatory sacrifice. No better evidence may be cited than this prayer to illustrate the efforts made in the Reformation settlement to sift from Anglican thought the errors and accretions of Medieval Scholasticism.

For our purpose we shall consider the Eucharistic Prayer of the American Book of Common Prayer. For the rationale of its liturgical action and thought, more than any Anglican formulary, presents a conception of Eucharistic Sacrifice which is consonant with that found in the liturgies of the primitive Church.

The liturgical artistry of the American revisers has provided the Church with a Eucharistic Prayer that has a peculiar wholeness or oneness. This is due largely to the sense of completeness that the prayer receives from its conformity with the Eucharistic Prayer found in the usages of the primitive Church. The prayer follows the classical liturgical pattern of the liturgy of St. Hippolytus, viz: 1. Commemoration. 2. Oblation. 3. Invocation. 4. Benefits of Communion. Yet it must be regarded as one prayer. For the sake of this discussion we shall regard the Eucharistic Prayer as beginning with the *Sursum Corda* ("Lift up your hearts") and ending with the great *Amen* immediately preceding the Lord's Prayer.

According to early Christian writers and the earliest liturgies, as Dr. Walter Lowrie has pointed out in *The Lord's Supper and The Liturgy*, the Eucharistic Prayer as a whole is the prayer of consecration. In fact, the whole Eucharistic or Consecration Prayer must be treated as one individual moment of action and prayer in which the Church in union with our Lord offers

His sacrifice to God and invokes His acceptance and blessing upon her offering that those who receive the Eucharistic gifts offered may be partakers of the sacrament of His Body and Blood. The exacting task of the Church is to formulate a Eucharistic Prayer which gives as accurate an articulation as possible to this action of sacrifice and consecration. The incorporation within a liturgical framework of the proper sequence of action and thought necessary to express the concept of sacrifice has been called the "rhythm of sacrifice" by Evelyn Underhill.

The sequence of the thought and action of the Eucharistic Prayer in setting forth the Anglican conception of the Eucharistic Sacrifice reveals the nature of the holy sacrifice to be three-fold. As the Archbishops declared in their defense, the Eucharist may be said to be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; it is a sacrifice in that it is the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ which the Church re-presents to God, and it is a sacrifice in that under the form of the Eucharistic Oblations the Church offers herself to God in union with the heavenly offering of Christ. The rationale of the Eucharistic Prayer sets forth these three aspects of the one individual act of sacrifice which the Church presents to God until His coming again.

Thus as we approach the great unchanging central part of the Eucharist which is the Eucharistic or Consecration Prayer we find that for all its parts we have a single mighty prayer of sacrifice to God. As the sequence of this prayer is disclosed, we find ample support for the Archbishops' assertion that we may regard the Eucharist as a sacrifice chiefly in three ways. First, the Eucharist may be said to be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the beautiful invitation to the assembled congregation to lift up their hearts to praise, glorify, and give thanks to God, to which the Church

rejoins that it is meet and proper, in fact, our bounden duty, to laud and thank God for all that we have and are. In this, the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church offers her blessing and thanks to God for His great goodness as Creator, her thankful remembrance culminating in the exalted Tersanctus. Immediately following the preface the Church which has now poured out her thankfulness for God's goodness in His mighty work of creation sets forth her thanksgiving for man's redemption through Christ. It is in this commemoration of Christ's life and death, signified by the Eucharistic Oblation of the sacramental Holy Gifts, that the Church offers to God "the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make." Uniting her own self-offering to this oblation the Church pleads that God will mercifully "accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." Thus the Eucharist may be understood as a sacrifice in which the Church praises and thanks God for man's redemption; and this His greatest blessing of that redemption.

Secondly, the Eucharist may be said to be a sacrifice in that it is the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ. Christ has charged His Church to commemorate His passion and death by something done. Rather than constituting a mere verbal or mental remembrance, the liturgical action of the Eucharist follows Christ's commission to "Do this." This action exalts—it does not detract from—the sacrifice of Calvary. To repeat the words of institution and to fracture the bread and to pour out the wine do not merely represent how Christ's Body was broken and His Blood was shed on Calvary. These actions represent the sacrifice of the cross in the sense that they recall or make that sacrifice present again in such a manner that "it becomes here and now operative by its effects" (Dom Gregory Dix). Bishop Andrewes in speaking of the Eucharist as the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ, offered once and for



all, taught explicitly that in a very real sense the sacrifice of Calvary is sacramentally present and operative in the Eucharist.

And we are in this action not only carried up to Christ (*Sursum Corda*), but we are also carried back to Christ as He was at the very instant, and in the very act of His offering. So, and no otherwise, doth this text teach. So, and no otherwise, do we represent Him. By the incomprehensible power of His eternal Spirit not He alone, but He as at the very act of His offering is made present to us, and we incorporated into His death, and invested in the benefits of it. If a host could be turned into Him now glorified as He is, it would not serve; Christ offered is it; thither we must look.

A present-day Anglican author, E. L. Mascall, is in agreement with Andrewes that the Eucharist may be regarded as a sacrifice of the cross. He says,

The sacrificial character of the Mass does not consist in its being an event which happens to Christ after His ascension and which in some way repeats or imitates His death, but in its being the means by which the whole sacrificial action of Christ centered in the cross and culminated in the Ascension, is made sacramentally present in His Church. It is not a repetition of the sacrifice, nor is it the completing of the sacrifice—it is simply the sacrifice itself, present in the unique mode of a sacrament; present, that is, simply and solely because the sacramental species are the divinely ordained effective signs of it.

Free from the materialism of the scholastic doctrine of Transubstantiation, the spiritualized conception of the Real Presence in Anglican thought precludes any possibility that the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as signified by the words of institution and accompanying manual actions, could be considered as a repetition of Calvary, re-immolation or a further act of propitiation. Anglican thought has always asserted that the Eucharist was instituted by the Lord for a memorial of Himself, even of His sacrifice, and may therefore be called a commemorative



sacrifice, not only to be a sacrament for spiritual nourishment. Yet it is denied that either of these uses, sacrament or sacrifice, since they were instituted by the Lord together, can be divided from the other by man either because of the negligence of the people or because of the avarice of the priesthood. The sacrifice offered by the Church is Eucharistic; it is a memorial of the sacrifice made on Calvary. Anglican thought can never allow that the Christ made of bread is re-sacrificed in the Eucharist.

It is in the oblation part of the Eucharistic Prayer that the Church's intention to plead and re-present to God the one offering made by Christ on the cross is most clearly discerned. As long as the Church distinguishes between the action of Christ's self-offering on the cross and the Church's Eucharistic action by which she re-presents and pleads the merits of Calvary there will be no danger that the Church's offering can be regarded as a repetition of Calvary.

Above all, the Eucharistic Oblation brings to mind the role that Christ has in the great drama of redemption. In the sacrifice of Calvary, Christ is both priest and victim. In the Eucharist He is still the priest and victim, but now the Heavenly High Priest, who pleads and intercedes perpetually to God at the Heavenly Altar the merits of His sacrifice, and offers Himself as crucified. In the words of St. Augustine, "Thou art the Priest, Thou art the Victim, Thou art the Offerer, Thou art that which is offered. He is Himself the Priest who has now entered into the parts within the veil, and alone there of those who have worn flesh makes intercession for us." In virtue of His sacrifice, Christ pleads and establishes His advocacy. Calvary is the basis of our Lord's perpetual heavenly session as High Priest and humanity's advocate.

Therefore, when we re-present Calvary at the altar we must remember that our Lord is re-presenting Calvary in

Heaven. What we have done we have done in union with Him. The one true sacrifice, once offered, which He pleads in His heavenly session we plead in our intercession. His perfect intercession and our imperfect intercession are one. Our offering is not a different offering from His, it is not even another offering; it is the one and the same with His. Our Lord's heavenly offering, therefore, is identical with the Church's offering.

The offering made on Calvary, through our Lord's heavenly session and the Church's Eucharistic offering, will not cease until the end of time. Although our Lord offered Himself once and for all, He continues to re-present that offering in Heaven and He has commanded us to re-present that same offering in the Eucharist until His coming again. In union with His heavenly offering the Church offers all that He did and that He eternally is.

Our offering has a beginning and ending with each celebration of the Eucharist. His offering is constant and unceasing. The supreme value and significance of the Church's offering is that it is also His offering. The Church makes this offering only because He has offered His sacrifice once for all, with which we need to be in union. We do not repeat Calvary; we re-present what our Lord actually did once for all on Calvary, and for which He has ascended into Heaven, that He may continue to re-present the cross and His death on behalf of the whole world.

As humanity's representative in Heaven the glorified and ascended Christ perpetually offers a perfect human worship of God. Through the Eucharistic Oblation made under the forms of the sacramental elements the earthly and the heavenly sacrifices are united as one. The heavenly and earthly altars become one as the holy gifts of the Eucharistic Oblation are

offered and accepted at the heavenly altar and identified as one with the Son's eternal self-oblation. The Church invokes God to accept, and to bless and sanctify her Eucharistic gifts of oblation. United to her oblation, the Church, as the "Mystical Body" of Christ, offers herself as the first fruits to God by Christ, a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice.

The Eucharist may, therefore, be called a sacrifice inasmuch as the Church offers herself through the Eucharistic Oblation to be a holy sacrifice in union with Christ's heavenly offering of His sacrifice. She is also able to offer herself as the Holy Body of Christ because in the Eucharist she receives and participates of the same sacrificed thing, that is, the Body and Blood of Christ offered by Him on the cross to His Father.

In the great Eucharistic prayer, the worshipping Church in union with her Lord re-presents His sacrifice to God and offers Him as sacrificed. As Jeremy Taylor wrote, "He is by prayers and the sacrament re-presented as offered up to God as sacrificed." The worshippers through this act of oblation present their own offering of material goods, of praise and thanksgiving, of their souls and bodies. This total offering—the commemoration and re-presentation of the Passion, bread and wine, praise and self-oblation—form the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Our Blessed Lord, knowing what is in man, his sense of joy for the endless blessings of God's creation and his sense of thankfulness for God's work of redemption, gave man a means of adequately expressing his "eucharist," his thanksgiving. He said, "Do this." He gave us something to do, not something to say, in the re-presenting of Calvary. In the re-presenting of the supreme act of God's saving work on man's behalf, the Church presents her supreme act of worship to God. For in this act of worship mankind's need to participate and to share in Christ's redemptive life and death is fulfilled. In Eucharistic worship

we find what we need, our satisfaction in worshipping and thanking God for His goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men.

This He gave us as a thing of greatest price to offer for that which needeth a great price, our sins, so many in number, and so foul in quality. We had nothing worthy God; this He gave us that is worthy Him, which cannot be but accepted, offer we it never so often. Let us then offer Him, and in the act of offering ask of Him what is meet; for we shall find Him no less bounteous than Herod, to grant what is duly asked upon His Birthday. He is given us, as Himself saith, as "the living bread from heaven," which Bread is His "flesh" born this day, (Preached on Christmas Day) and after "given for the life of the world" (John 6:51). For look how we do give back that He gave us, even so doth He give back to us that which we gave Him, that which He had of us. This He gave for us in sacrifice, and this He giveth us in the Sacrament, that the sacrifice may by the Sacrament be truly applied to us.—BISHOP LANCELOT ANDREWES



# 7

## DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ASSETS

*by*

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WITHOUT God, *man* can not; but without man, God *will* not!" Of all the Christian aphorisms for which St. Augustine was justly famed, not one of them evokes the kind of wisdom which speaks more tellingly to the heart or strikes with more incisive impact upon the mind. "Without *God*, man *can't*; but without *man*, God *won't!*"

### I

No matter how primitive a man's theology may be, the first half of that apparent paradox is a twice-told tale whose truth is painfully obvious. In the revealing hour of honest self-examination, we all know how pathetically limited we are when we try to walk alone. We know how microscopic our basic assets really are. In our secret heart of hearts, we're all too well aware of how woefully inadequate we are, without God, in the eternal scheme of things. Our own bootstraps are less than useless items of equipment. We can't bargain with God; and without Him, every alleged bargain turns quickly into a mockery of dust and ashes. So, unless a cocky individual is determined to run the sin of preposterous pride into the ground

of total self-destruction, he has no choice but to turn to the old hymn and repeat its humble words:

In my hand no price I bring;  
Simply to the cross I cling!

Which is nothing short of fair enough. But it would be foolishly shortsighted to leave the matter there, and not examine closely the other side of Augustine's coin. If it be true, and it all too obviously is, that without God, man can not, it seems to be no less valid that without man, God *will* not. And that can be a pretty exciting business. It promises a state of affairs which can be nothing short of world-shattering in its inevitable implications.

Briefly, it insists that virtually nothing creatively beneficial will happen to us or through us in this world, until we have co-operatively prepared God's way for Him. The thoroughfare betwixt Heaven and earth bears all of the unmistakable characteristics of a two-way street. Running like a golden thread through every page of the New Testament is the tacit implication that you and I were born to share in the perfecting of God's unfinished creation. Without that sharing, gladly and obediently offered, His creation would simply not get itself completed.

Of course, God did not have to have us. But He chose to have us! And when you consider the countless alternatives He had, His choosing of us, with its concomitant gift of free will, is the most breathtaking compliment conceivable to the mind of man. How easily God could have created us as the automatic, insensate creatures of His own cavalier caprices, or involuntary puppets jerked meaninglessly on supernatural strings by a puppet-master forever out of sight and forever unknown and unknowable. Or He might, in the twinkling of a second, have made us perfect at the outset, never knowing the privilege of

growing pains nor the inestimable gift of responsive struggle upward toward the light. He might even have fashioned us as creatures vacuum-packed at birth, unsoiled and unsoiling, and fit only for the thin atmosphere of an ivory tower at the remote edge of some far and lonely land like Tierra del Fuego.

However, God be forever praised, He eliminated all of these lesser and hellish alternatives. Out of the illimitable depths of His love, He fashioned children blessed with the unplumbed gift of responding to that love in a manner intended to be worthy of both the gift and the Giver. So, to repeat the Good News, God did not have to have us. He chose to have us! Which is why our response to that love is the apparently irrevocable proviso upon which the fullest expression of the Creator's love is based in the first place and in the last.

## II

It is nothing short of fascinating to note how unerringly often several of Christ's miracles echo the implications of this eternal proviso. You and I tend to be so overawed by the fact of the miracles themselves that we frequently fail to ferret out the presence of the initial proviso upon which the subsequent miracle is quietly founded. In each instance, it is terrifyingly clear that the miraculous good would not have taken place, had not responsive men and women, somewhere in the company, made a responsive offering of their assets, and made the offering in a spirit of humble and unquestioning obedience gladly given.

The first miracle in this category was also the first miracle which Jesus ever effected in His public ministry. Typical of the Lord who loved people and the kindly fruits of the earth, He saw to it that it took place at a wedding reception. It was the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. Now it is nothing less than

simple logic to observe that Jesus, the Incarnate God, did not stand in need of the aid of any of the wedding guests as He made ready to turn the water into wine. But He apparently planned that they must make ready also.

Try to imagine the tense situation which obtained at the moment when our Lord made ready to act. The party was still at its gay height when the bride's parents were horrified to learn that the last drop of available wine had just been consumed. Their pathetic panic must have been painful to see. It was too late to wonder whether some of the company had slipped in, uninvited, to make merry with the friends of the family; or whether a goodly number of guests had declined with thanks in answer to the invitation's R.S.V.P. and then, the day being fair and cool, changed their minds at the last minute; or even whether somebody had blundered in the original order from the vintner. In any event, the embarrassment of the bride's father is not hard to imagine.

At this juncture, Jesus moved quietly into the center of the paralyzed picture. Again it must be noted that Jesus Christ, being God, had both the ability and the prerogative to turn water into wine by means of instantaneous fiat. But at this preliminary stage in the dramatic proceedings, God does not take advantage of His Godhead. It is not that He could not, but that He would not. The preparatory co-operation of nearby individuals had first to be secured.

So Jesus quietly singled out certain men at the party and gave them their simple orders. Put into colloquial English, His words were, "Please gather up those empty flagons over by the wall. . . . Thank you. Now take and lower them into the well and fill them brimful of water. Then when you have done that, draw them out again and take them directly to the father of the bride."



Parenthetically, it seems that there was some hesitation on the part of the men receiving the Lord's instructions. The quiet request may well have seemed witless and meaningless. It was then, in the midst of this moment of doubt, that our Lord's mother moved unobtrusively into the picture. From the profound depths of a sensitive soul's intuition, she whispered to the hesitant men. Perhaps her Son's directions sounded as mysterious to her as it did to the men. But as one who had long since "kept all these things in her heart," she had also long since begun to catch a fleeting glimpse of the immeasurable implications inherent in this Person whose earthly mother she was.

So with a wisdom rare to mortal men then as now, she whispered her persuasive charge. "Whatsoever He commandeth you, do it!" And she might well have added, for our ears, as well as for theirs, "Do it, even though you won't always understand it!" For it is one of the heresies of a scientific age that we are loath to obey even God Himself, unless we have first been vouchsafed a clearly proved and understood blueprint sent by special delivery from the ramparts of Heaven itself.

The men standing by at the wedding reception are not to be blamed for any hesitation they may have displayed. They were not at that moment aware of whom they were dealing with. But Mary's heart had already begun telling her the ineffable truth. And the Church, the Bible, and Christian history over the subsequent nineteen hundred years have been trying to tell us. The divine Mysteries are His. But the stewardship of those Mysteries is ours! And unless that stewardship is faithful in preparing the Lord's way, those beneficial acts, which alone can bring to a bruised world the healing touch of that peace which passes mere man's understanding, will simply not be fully effected.

In any event, to return to the wedding feast, the men co-

operatively bent their minds and their muscles to the doing of the Lord's will. Then, and then only, did the miracle come to pass. The flat fact is that the water was not turned into wine, until human beings like you and like me had given of the best of their several abilities to prepare for the ultimate good which God Himself would be able to bring to pass.

The second applicable miracle is even more dramatic in its setting, as well as in its mounting movements toward a spine-tingling climax. It concerns the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. It is a miracle recounted over and over in the various versions of the Gospel, as though to make indubitably certain that the implications of this story should in no wise be missed by him who reads as he runs.

And again it needs must be noted that we are not now concerned with how Jesus effected the divine nourishing of the five thousand souls fanned out about Him. God has His own secret times and His own mysterious means of managing the good which needs creating. He never capriciously suspends or breaks the universal laws of His own making. He simply invokes the operation of laws of whose existence we are at best only fragmentarily aware here and now.

If we have learned to sit humbly at our Lord's feet, an excellent posture, incidentally, to be found in, we shall gratefully and wholeheartedly accept the miracle as one more instance of Christ's ceaseless compassion for His fumbling children. At the same time, however, if we are still sitting there at His feet, we shall come to realize that no less a miracle is ultimately involved in the permissive teaching which Jesus visited upon Philip and Andrew and the little lad with the microscopic offering of the five barley loaves and the two small fishes.

The great crowd had stood silent and spellbound all morning long, listening hungrily to the Word from the lips and heart of

Him who spoke as no man before or since has ever spoken. But even the most noble absorption has its human limits; and by the time the sun stood hot overhead, their stomachs told them of the hour. At this juncture, Jesus turned to His Disciples and asked the inevitable question. It was a knotty question, not easily resolved. The Disciples did not want to hear it, for they well knew that, in and of themselves, no satisfactory answer could be provided. "How shall we feed so many?"

The Bible quietly notes that Jesus knew perfectly well what He was going to do. Then why the apparently needless question? Obviously He was testing the Apostles, hoping to evoke a thoughtful response which might indicate an awareness of their own individual and corporate sharing with God in the responsibility of the moment. It is almost akin to the challenge with which you gently but directly confront a little child when he faces a problem whose answer stubbornly eludes him. In your relative maturity, you see the problem as something absurdly easy to resolve, and you know precisely how you shall go about its resolution. But to the little child, the situation looms up as an impossible impasse in his life. So you fling out the challenge, praying that he will rise to the occasion and bring all of his small gifts and talents to bear upon the knotty question.

Well, whatever luck you may have had the last time you tried to evoke a constructive response from one of your own little ones, Jesus had almost no luck whatsoever with *His* little ones, at least not until the young boy stumbled forth shyly with the basket tucked under his arm and offered to Jesus all of the gifts he possessed at the moment. Little though they plainly were, they were all that the Master was waiting for, to use as a kind of spiritual springboard for a momentous launching into the deep.



But as for the Apostles themselves, they were all too much like you and like me. They woefully lacked the little boy's childlike sense of wonder. And when we lose—or fail to develop—that priceless gift of trusting wonder, all other gifts lose their inner sparkle and become sicklied over with a pedestrian flatness.

Philip seemed least of all to be equipped with the promise of wonder. He was the first one to whom our Lord shot the tantalizing question. By way of answer, Philip mumbled something about the hopeless inadequacy of two hundred penny-worth of bread, and then lapsed into a defeated silence. In other words, he promptly gave up the whole situation as a bad job. Figuratively, he shrugged his shoulders and turned away. It was an impossible mess, and he would have none of it, thank you. Do you recognize perhaps something of yourself in Philip's reaction? The world's problems are so staggeringly enormous and complex, and we are personally so hopelessly small and inadequate, that we are promptly tempted to disown any trace of individual duty. Like Pilate, no less than Philip, we completely wash our hands of all responsibility.

The Master spent no more time on His servant Philip, but rather turned to Andrew. Now Peter's brother had apparently developed at least a shred more of a sense of responsibility than Philip had allowed himself to nurture. Like so many of us today, Andrew somehow sensed that this business of sharing in creation was indeed a completely co-operative enterprise, and that even the proffering of a cup of cold water in Christ's name possessed within it the seeds of a spiritual revolution.

So Andrew replies, in substance, "Master, there's a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes!" Now, had Andrew stopped right there, putting an exclamation point, or even a sharply definite period, at the end of that first sentence,



he would have given his Lord the response He was waiting for. But, again like you and me, he spoiled a good beginning by tacking on a bad ending. He started off with commendable confidence, faithfully offering his Master whatever assets were humanly available in this hour of need. It was a glad sentence that he had begun to utter, brimming with Christian co-operation. But then Andrew overshot the high mark of his calling and tripped himself up by virtue of the added length of a sentence which ran downhill as fast as his first sentence had leaped upward.

In place of a definitive period to close his hopeful offer, he inserted a mere comma which, along with an unhappy "but," had the effect of sending his affirmation reeling down into a deep valley of the spirit. "Master, there's a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes, *but* what are they among so many?" So did a confidently declarative statement end in a quavering question, shot through with doubt. The double-edged irony is this. Not only did Andrew conclude by doubting his own qualifications as a steward of his Lord's mysteries, he ended by implicitly doubting his Lord's qualifications to make much out of little. In short, Andrew had admittedly recognized his share of the responsibility for finding some food. That is, he well knew that he had a personal part to play in securing the raw materials out of which Jesus could effect those monumental results which a human being by himself could never effect. But then he spoiled his entire awareness so completely, that it might almost as well have never existed.

Here once more, the analogy to ourselves is embarrassingly obvious. Be it said on our behalf at the outset, we don't often shed responsibility to the degree that we simply shrug a hopeless shoulder and turn away from our Lord. More often than not, we honestly do recognize the basic truth that a steward *of*

God has responsibilities *to* God. We sense our own individual share in the overall picture at least as fully as Andrew sensed it. But, like Andrew, we too often spoil the beauty and the power of our recognition by waxing unduly pessimistic, sometimes even edging the sin of despair itself. "The world is so complex and so fouled up," we say hopelessly, "and the problems are so many and so intricately interwoven, that even though I may have some small gifts to offer the Lord—some energies, talents, and assets—what are they among so many? The needs are as big as I am little. With so much to be done, and with so little to do it with, why should I bother? If God be God, let Him take over the business, and good riddance to it."

But that's precisely what He won't do. He has always flatly refused to take over the whole business. He does indeed take over most of it. But it is everlastingly true that the blessed things which most desperately need doing will simply not get themselves done, as long as we refuse, with false humility or misplaced pride, to accept our vital share in their doing. It's as simple as that. God, not man, is the final Judge of how infinitely valuable man may be in God's eyes. If Jesus Christ has seen fit, in His infinite wisdom and equally infinite love, to bestow upon man the most breathtaking compliment conceivable, it behooves man to accept the great salute with grace and glad gallantry, and to offer the best that lies around him and within him, doing it gratefully and without question or cavil.

That was the lesson which Philip and Andrew stood in need of learning. And the teaching was not long in coming. For this is the juncture at which the little boy comes into the focus of the picture. We don't know exactly where the child had been standing when the fruitless exchange between Jesus and the two Disciples took place. But he must have been positioned

close enough to Andrew for the Apostle to have seen the basket and its contents. Maybe the lad, hearing the discouraging words of Philip and Andrew, and noting the quiet rebuke in our Lord's eyes, promptly figured that the thing to do was to offer his gifts, whether they struck him as being hopelessly small or needlessly large. So, shy or self-assured, he apparently came forward and did what he sensed was expected of him. He offered what he had to offer. He was probably sorry that his gifts were not greater. Young though he was, he must yet have realized that the assets in his basket were as pathetically tiny as the need was overwhelmingly great. But that was judging by man's standards. And there was something about this man, whom that group nearby called Master, which was mysteriously persuasive and reassuring.

In any event, the child made his offering, and Jesus accepted it. Whether the boy extended the basket with a halting shyness or with an in-the-nick-of-time gallantry or with a child-like wonder, surely Jesus received his sacrifice with that gentle grace which the French call *Politesse du coeur*, that God-given graciousness which comes directly from the heart and which warms the heart it goes to. At that point, Christ was able to say, "Now make the people sit down." Then, and then only, did the miracle take place.

What a lesson it was thus given Philip and Andrew shamefacedly to learn! And do you suppose that the little boy could ever forget the choking joy of that signal day? It must surely have been marked forever on the calendar of his growing heart. The miracle was not concerned only with what the Lord had done. It was equally concerned with what God had done after what he, a little lad, had *first* done! That kind of partnership—available just as much now as it was then, and available to the small as to the great—was and is no less a



miracle than the actual feeding of memorable nourishment itself.

The third miracle took place in a cemetery. Our Lord's friend Lazarus had suddenly died. As soon as Jesus heard the news, He left on the long trip back to be with Mary and Martha in their hour of grief, for He had been many miles away when the death occurred. Arriving at the house, He found the two sisters distraught, with Mary crying, "Oh, Master, if only you had been here, our brother would not have died!"

Patiently and compassionately, Christ tried to tell Mary and Martha that Lazarus was not really lifeless; that their brother had simply crossed a threshold from this level of life to a higher; and that to make possible his journey from strength to strength in the life of perfect service and worship in God's nearer Presence, Lazarus had just divested himself of a bruised and outworn physical body, so that he might take on the finer habiliments of a spiritual body.

However, the sisters were polite, but inconsolable. "Yes, we know. But still our brother is dead."

"No, he is not, my children. For I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

Nevertheless, despite our Lord's most persuasive words, Mary and Martha failed to apprehend the point. So, as Jesus did at Cana of Galilee, and again at the feeding of the five thousand, He once more effected a miracle to dramatize what He was so desperately attempting to proclaim. Meanwhile, is it any wonder that this is the spot in the New Testament where the shortest verse appears: "Jesus wept"? Why, in the face of such slowness to learn, wouldn't He weep? When mortal doubts impede the gladness of the immortal heart, there is justifiable cause for tears!

If nothing short of a private miracle will serve to dramatize



the everlasting power and love of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, then such a miracle seems worth the risk, even though poor Lazarus himself gains nothing from being unceremoniously whisked back *here* scarcely before he has had the opportunity to be launched on the initial leg of his triumphant journey *there*.

But once again a firm proviso is inserted. Even the dead will not be raised until those standing in tears at the graveside are moved to share with God in a co-operative action. Now it is patently clear that a God who can raise the dead does not have to depend upon the preparatory acts of human beings to effect His miracle. But we have to remind ourselves over and over that He *chooses* to look to us for this preparing of His way. That's why Jesus carefully requested the bystanders to lift the gravestone and move it to one side. Christ did not raise the dead, until His earthly servants had raised a tombstone!

As John the Baptist was the original messenger dedicated to preparing the way for the Christ's earthly coming, so are you and I created as messengers dedicated to preparing the way for His coming into our hearts, as well as into the hearts of the brethren around us, near and far. Which fact reminds one of that heroic statue of Christ in the yard of Trinity Church, Boston. The wonder of that statue lies not only in the glory of the Lord there represented, but also in the presence of Phillips Brooks, who is depicted as standing out in front of our Lord, preparing His way. Compared with the figure of the Christ, Phillips Brooks is small and ineffectual-looking. Taken alone, no one knew better than Brooks that he counted for little in the scheme of things. But one of the significant points about this dual statue is that the Christ has placed His outstretched hand on Phillips Brooks' shoulder. In short, the great things that Christ was effecting, Brooks was preparing the

way for! He was in front of his Lord, plowing the soil as it were, so that his Lord might plant the divine seed.

Even that perpetual miracle, the Holy Communion, began as a Christ-plus-man action. It still continues as a Christ-with-man miracle, and will go on as such until the end of time. On the very night of the Institution of the Last Supper itself, the Lord did not come into those blessed elements of bread and of wine until His Disciples had made an oblation, so that He could pour Himself into it. It is always required of a Christian steward that he offer back to Christ something of the gift originally vouchsafed him by his Lord, but only after the steward has injected something of his own labor and love into it. Then it is that the Lord of life infuses those given elements and returns them to the stewards in the form of the divine nourishment of His Body and Blood.

That is implicitly why the Disciples were given the prior tasks of securing and preparing the Upper Room. It was required of them that they make ready the candles, the bread, the wine, the water, the snowy fair linen, and all else which might be found needful for the sacred feast. And along with all of this preparation, it was patently expected that they also prepare themselves. No Communion is fully and truly a *Holy* Communion until it has been made *whole*. And this wholeness does not come into its perfect completion until men and women and children have gratefully made their responsive offering of love unto Him who first loved us. Then, and then only, does the incomparably lovely miracle find its destined way into the hearts of mankind.

### III

Now, from all of this preparatory material, there are just two brief lessons which need learning. Without the learning

of these lessons, no other lessons will stand us in sufficient stead to bring us to the harvesting of our Christian destinies. The first of the two lessons is this. *Do not underestimate your assets.* Whether they be monumental or minuscule, accept them and use them to the full. In this very act of gladly accepting and using them in Christ's name, they will develop in depth and in breadth. Even new talents, hitherto unimagined and undiscovered, may be thus nurtured into being. God unceasingly needs those gifts and can forever use them if you will only offer them to Him. In fact, He alone can bless them and make out of them the sense they were intended to make when He planted them within your personality.

No talent is too small, in God's eyes, for significant results to be evolved from it. When you and I dedicate the gifts which are as unique as our own thumbprints, it is He, not we, who will effect wondrously far-reaching results beyond our wildest dreaming. And may we never, in grief or pride, forget: without such preparatory dedication, those blessed deeds which so desperately need doing may never get themselves done, thus leaving ourselves and the world around us so much the poorer. God alone can use those talents for the achieving of beneficial actions which He can miraculously bring into being, even in the very hour when you and I are blandly unaware that He *is* using us in the first place. You and I are totally inadequate for the job, whatever it may be, if we insist on trying to do it by our puny selves. Only God is adequate for the salvation of our souls and for the healing of the world. We don't do the job. He does it, but He does it chiefly through these preparatory offerings which we thankfully and trustfully make.

To that end, it becomes clearer than ever that it is always worse than useless to emulate the Philip of that untrusting hour when he failed to realize his own vital share in the creat-



ing of a God-given act of memorable nourishment. No matter how overwhelming the problem—or how useless our part may seem to be—to shrug and turn away is to serve neither God nor man, but the Devil. Philip had begun with a half-hearted question, “What are two hundred pennyworth of bread among so many?” And he ended, via a negation of both himself and his Lord, by completely devaluating even the two hundred pennyworth of bread. Philip undoubtedly ended by ascending the ultimate ramparts of Heaven, but that final achieving of celestial joy was surely not gained by virtue of his actions and reactions at the scene of the feeding of the five thousand.

Nor is it of any virtue to begin to respond to Christ with the easy enthusiasm of Andrew, only to toboggan down into the valley of despairing doubt, even before the initial sentence of highhearted confidence has run its course. Like so many of us, Andrew had begun on a note of faithful trust. But before the trustful note had a chance to prove itself, Andrew had unwittingly tried to cut Christ down to the size of a doubting Disciple. He had indeed started by responding to the human responsibility inherently within him. But he ended by sabotaging that very same responsibility scarcely before he’d started. The apostolic name of Andrew finished its course by being wonderfully worthy of its Master. But there were interim times, such as this one, when Jesus may well have wondered whether the eternal lesson would ever be taught this side of Heaven.

You and I tend to feel pretty proud when we somehow manage to exceed the measure which Philip meted to himself on that classic occasion. But we have little cause for pride. In our own day, the five thousand again remain to be fed—but now multiplied many times beyond the mind of man to measure—and we are hard put to muster more faith than Andrew was able to bring to bear upon the situation. Our own



lack lies exactly where his lay. We begin by seizing gladly upon the talents which lie at hand. But then it suddenly dawns on us that we are small and the problem is big. And then, forgetting God, we collapse in ignoble depression.

The little lad, he of the pathetic barley loaves and the two small fishes, was destined to be the forever unforgotten hero of the day. And for what reason? Simply because he used his God-given grace to offer his Lord what little it lay in his power to offer, irrespective of how great the need or how little his own assets at the moment. As we pointed out earlier, the miracle of the actual feeding was a miracle indeed. But no less a wonder must have been the heartwarming lesson which the child undoubtedly learned to hug happily and fruitfully to his breast: God, not we, effects the ultimate miracles; but we, not God, are honored to plan the preliminary steps. As so often happens in the humble enough, they learn from a little child set in their midst.

The other lesson is this. If we are not to *underestimate* our assets, then neither are we to *overestimate* our weakness! God knows that you and I are weak and full to flowing over with failures of one sort or another. You and I have our favorite follies, our sedulous sins, and our teeming temptations. You have yours; I have mine. As best we can, we hide them secretly in our heart of hearts. But however successful we may be in keeping the knowledge of them from even our closest brethren, God is all too well acquainted with them. For He is that Lord "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

He knows them, but He is neither upset nor defeated by them, because He asks only that we compensate for them. That is, let's say that on the ledger of your life, you have a weakness which has tortured you for years. You know about it; God

knows about it; and God only knows how many others know about it and have suffered, directly or indirectly, because of it. You have honestly prayed about it and, with equal honesty, have agonized over it. But still the demon of your weakness haunts and assails you, and still you fall suppliant before its persuasive onslaught.

Let's not minimize the torture and the terror and the terrible results of that temptation to which you ultimately yield, time after time. The fact remains, however, that though this side of your life's ledger is peppered with an ink of shameful red, there is another side which deserves attention because of entries deservedly recorded in black. There is admittedly something of the Jekyll-Hyde paradox flamboyantly present in all of us, to one degree or another, dependent upon factors too numerous to mention. But if you "do truly repent you of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbor and intend to lead a new life," then the Devil can do his damndest and yet not permanently be able to see to it that Mr. Hyde overcomes Dr. Jekyll!

In short, we can occasionally succumb *here* (despite our best efforts) while, at the same time, we can occasionally succeed *there* (because of our best efforts). So the battle is waged, and so the scales sway. But the imbalance is never so great, but what God can correct it if we will admit our weakness on the one hand, without failing to fight the good fight on the other! In time, God willing, the cancerous weakness over there will be defeated, never to rise again. But in the meantime, there is no just excuse for failing to support the good right hand offering the cup of cold water in Christ's name over here. Then, when the sinister battle is finally finished, the left hand can come to support the right, and a double offering can triumphantly be made. But that victory can never be achieved to the glory of

God, until the right hand is gallantly holding high the torch, while the left hand is still convulsively mired in the mud.

Both lessons are therefore of interwoven importance. If it is wrong to underestimate your assets, so is it no less wrong to overestimate your weakness. No Christian, even if possessed of a faith no larger than a grain of mustard seed, ever wrote a book, or preached a sermon, or built a table, or offered a handshake, or said a prayer, or did a loving deed, without awesomely sensing that the book, the sermon, the table, the handshake, the prayer, or the loving deed might well be the preparation for some miracle that God was waiting patiently to effect.

Only so are the flagons filled with water. Only so are the hungry fed. Only so are the dead raised. . . . And only so is the sacred feast made ready in the lives of each of us!



# 8

## THE CHRISTIAN DEMAND

*by*

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CHRISTIANITY seems to have little appeal to strong and successful men and women. It is with a feeling of surprise that we read of a champion athlete who has decided to become a Christian minister, or a prominent executive at the head of a Christian cause. Many times the clergy, in their calling, find a wife who says that her husband never goes to church, that he leaves it to her to take care of their religious obligations. The wife is thus expressing for herself and her husband the inclination to think of Christianity as only for weak, unsuccessful men and dependent women. Only too often, too, do we find that women far outnumber men in our church pews.

Alongside of this, and supporting this point of view, is the fact that our Lord is often portrayed as a thin-faced, undernourished ascetic. Too often preachers leave the impression in their sermons that there is nothing strong or vigorous about Christ, but that He is a soft-spoken, easy-going individual. Too many times is the idea expressed that God loves everyone so much that He would not allow anyone to go to Hell forever.

How many times have we heard Christian leaders state that our Lord did not really mean exactly what He said, when He

told His Disciples and us to "turn the other cheek," to "love them which persecute you," and to "do good to those who hate you." These words, they say, indicate weakness or cowardice, and they cannot be used literally in daily life. We hear the business executive state that the morality of the Golden Rule cannot be used in business, or the business will fail.

If you pursue this further, you may find the belief among many people that Christianity appeals, and must appeal, mainly to the fears of men, to that in them which is timid and shrinking, rather than to that which is courageous and strong.

It is also stated that the tone and the influence of the Church lacks manliness, and that it is this lack which causes many to avoid Christianity. Courage is looked upon as the foundation of manliness, and manliness as one of the highest qualities of human character.

It is perfectly true that we do admire manliness; we admire courage and strength in any man. But is it not true that the tremendous growth of interest in athletic events in this country has caused some confusion in our minds between strength of body and strength of character? Thousands of persons witness the football games, baseball games, and, in the last few years, basketball games. Strength of body, however, does not always prove strength of character. The weaknesses of character of some of our great athletic stars have been splashed across the pages of our daily newspapers.

To some extent, every man can develop the strength of his body if he takes the time and has the patience necessary to do so. It is, of course, not true that everyone has the physical equipment to become an athletic star.

In contrast with this, our Lord does not tell us that we are merely to improve our characters as we might improve our bodies. Our Lord points His finger at us and says: "Be ye per-

fect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Christ says that perfection of character is the final aim of the Christian life. We are supposed to perfect our moral life on this earth in the faithful following of our Lord's way. Think of it! Surrounded as we are by evil of all kinds, coming into constant contact with temptation, you and I are asked to meet and repel these temptations and become perfect. When you consider the various kinds and number of temptations that confront us in a single day, it is enough to make a good Christian throw up his hands and say: "I cannot do it!" And, if He demands this of us, it is only fair to ask if our Lord's own character was perfect, not only in love, meekness, purity, and unselfishness, but also in courage.

It is one thing to say that Christianity is for the strong and successful as well as for the weak, and that it takes courage and perseverance to be a good Christian. If we cannot point to Christ, however, as the exemplar of courage, it certainly cannot be expected of us. If our Lord is weak at any point in His own person, how can we be courageous? It is essential, therefore, that we examine the records of our Lord's life to see if there are in Him any traces of weakness or lack of courage.

But, first, it must be determined what we mean when we refer to courage or manliness. We can be sure that, in the ordinary sense of the word, it includes persistence, together with lack of concern for one's safety or ease, and the readiness to risk pain or death to do what is believed to be right. Proficiency in sports, noble and admirable as it is, does not prove the courage of the man. It proves muscular power and physical training. But a great athlete may be a brute or a coward, while a truly courageous man can be neither.

We have seen many examples of this in World War II and the Korean conflict. Many times a soldier risked his life to save a fellow-soldier. But the courage which is tested in times



of war on the battlefield is not common to us all or to all of life. On the other hand, the daily life of every person has occasions which try our courage as searchingly, even though not as terribly, as battlefield or fire or disaster. We are born into a state of war, with evil and falsehood and wrong, in a thousand forms, all around us, and a voice within calling on us to take our stand as men in the eternal battle against them.

And in this life-long fight, to be waged by every one of us alone, the final proof and test of our courage must be loyalty to truth, the rarest and most difficult of all human qualities. This is one lesson we can learn from our Lord's life. "For this end," He said, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth." And that He did.

To bear this witness against our enemies is comparatively easy. But to bear it against those we love, against those whose judgment and opinions we respect, is a real test of the strength of our character. It is natural and almost inevitable that we should get into the habit of appreciating and judging things mainly by the standards of those we love and respect. We find, sometimes, that those standards break down in the face of our Lord's commands. And we may be driven to admit that we have been looking at and judging things by convention, rather than truthfully and courageously.

Look now at the situation into which God sent His Son. The time seemed to be very propitious. The mind and heart of the nation was full of the expectation of a coming Messiah, a King who would break every yoke from the necks of the people, and would rule over the nation, sitting on the throne of David. The intensity of this expectation, in the opening days of His ministry, drew crowds into the wilderness beyond Jordan from all parts of Judaea and Galilee. John the Baptist was proclaiming that both the deliverance and the Kingdom for which they



had been looking were at hand. In the crowds who flocked to hear him, even the priests and the scribes felt the heavy yoke of Rome upon them. The record of the next three years shows clearly that even the leaders were wholly unprepared for anything other than a kingdom of this world, and a temporal throne to be set up in the Holy City.

And so, from the beginning, Christ had to contend not only against the whole of the established powers of Palestine, but against the aspirations of the best of His land. Those very Messianic hopes proved the greatest stumbling block in His path. Those who clung to them had the greatest difficulty in accepting the son of a carpenter as the promised Deliverer.

One of the problems facing anyone who wants to study the character of Christ is the absence of material about His early years. The only story we have, before His Baptism, is the visit to the Temple at the age of twelve, a striking picture of how this earnest young Boy became so interested in the Temple that He forgot His mother and St. Joseph and was left behind.

During all of His early life, there was, of course, much development of His character, as He sought for His Father's will. The meaning and scope of His work, in all its terrifying aspects, must have been dawning on His mind. Perhaps when He went up for the first time to the feast which commemorated the great deliverance of His people, He was already conscious of a voice within, calling Him to devote Himself to the work to which the God of His fathers had, in like manner, called Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Elijah, and John the Baptist. The universal longing and expectation among the people for a Messiah, who would work out the deliverance and triumph of the Jews, must have stirred up questions within Him. Perhaps the voice which He had been hearing within Him was not only *a* call, such as might come to any boy, but *the* call.

Since the visit to the Temple at the age of twelve is the only story of His boyhood, it would seem likely that this was the crisis of His early life, after which the task before Him would never have left His mind.

We have, then, to picture for ourselves the struggle and discipline going on for those many years—the call of God sounding continually in His ears, and the Boy, the Youth, the Young Man, each in turn attracted by the special temptations of His age, rising pure above them through the strength of perfect obedience, that strength which can come only from God.

We know from the Evangelists only that our Lord remained in obscurity in Galilee until His Baptism by John the Baptist. And yet, on that day when He rose to speak in the Synagogue, it is clear that the act was one which commended itself to His family and neighbors. "The eyes of all present were fastened on Him" as on one who might be expected to stand there, one from whom they might learn, and one who had a right to speak there.

It is evident from our Lord's perfect familiarity with the law and history of His country that He was diligent, during early life, in His studies. And the mysterious story of the crisis immediately following His Baptism, in which He wrestled, as it were, face to face with the tempter, indicates the nature of the daily battle which He was fighting from childhood. We cannot believe that the temptations came to Him for the first time after His Baptism. This was, apparently, the signal for which He had been patiently waiting. The time had come and He must now start His work. But the assurance that the call would come must have been growing on Him through all those years; and so, when it does come, He is perfectly prepared.

In His public discourse at Nazareth, we find our Lord announcing at once the fulfillment of the hopes of all those around Him. He proclaims, without preface or hesitation,

with directness and confidence, the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand." He takes for His text the passage in Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19), and goes on to say that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." There is no hesitation, no ambiguity, no doubt as to who He is, or what message He has come to deliver. In the Sermon on the Mount, He gives us the character and principles of the kingdom, laid down once and for all.

Christ springs at once, fully-armed, into the arena of combat. It is His thorough mastery of His own meaning and position from the beginning, this thorough insight into what He has to do, and the means by which it is to be done, that attracts our attention, as we try to understand the first thirty years of His life. It is unthinkable that during the years after His visit to the Temple at the age of twelve, He was not preparing Himself, and being prepared by His Father for this work. It is hard to imagine the strength of character implied in this patient waiting in obscurity and doubt through the years when most men are setting their feet on the road they are to follow. Waiting for the call which would convince Him that the voice within was not a lying voice, in the meantime making Himself all that God meant Him to be, without haste and without misgiving, must have been a sore trial.

In the time of preparation for the battle of life, this is the true test. Haste and distrust are sure signs of weakness, if not cowardice. Just in so far as they prevail in any life, even the most heroic, the man fails. In our Lord's life up to the age of thirty, there is not the slightest trace of such weakness. From all



that we are told, and all we can infer, He made no haste, and gave way to no doubt, waiting for God's will, and patiently preparing Himself for whatever His work might be. And so His work from the first was perfect, and through His whole public life He never faltered or wavered, never had to withdraw or modify a word once spoken. He stands, the true model of the courage and manliness of boyhood and youth and early manhood.

During the weeks and months of His active ministry also, there is no trace of lack of courage, or doubt of any kind. Once He has begun His great task, there is no shrinking or looking back. The strain and burden of an important message has, in others, found the weak places in the faith and courage of the most devoted and heroic of those to whom it has been entrusted. Moses pleads under its pressure that another may be sent in his place, asking despairingly, "Why hast Thou sent me?" Elijah prays for death. Such shrinkings and doubts enlist our sympathy, make us feel the tie of a common humanity which binds us to such men. But the perfect manliness of Christ shows no signs of this.

If courage is best proved by physical daring, the purification of the Temple must be considered. By the act of driving the money-changers out of the Temple, Christ presumed to exercise authority in the very Temple precincts. This was an attack upon the center and symbol of their religion. It also attacked the Jerusalem authorities in a way that could not be ignored without admitting their wrongs. Calling the Temple a den of thieves was to call the priests themselves robbers of the people. And then to state that if "this Temple" were destroyed, He could rebuild it in three days was the lash of a whip upon a bee-sting. The words were not understood by the authorities, or even by His own Disciples, in their full mean-



ing, that His body, and the body of every man, is the true temple of God. But they understood enough of them to see that He was opposed to evil and wrong-doing, and that He was determined to wipe it out. And those who would not admit this brooded over it until their day of vengeance came.

To stand by what our conscience witnesses for as truth, through evil report and good report, even against the opposition of those we love, and of those whose judgment we respect; to cut ourselves off deliberately from them is certainly one of the most severe trials to which we can be put. A man must feel at such times that the Spirit of God is upon him, as it was upon our Lord when He rose in the Synagogue at Nazareth. Selecting the passage in Isaiah that speaks most directly of the Messiah, He claimed that title for Himself when He said that today the prophecy was fulfilled in Him.

The fierce, hard spirit of His listeners is at once roused to fury. They would kill Him then and there and settle His claims, once and for all. But He passes through them, and away from the quiet home where He had been brought up, alone, so far as man could make Him so, and homeless for the rest of His life on earth. Yet not alone, for the Father is with Him; nor homeless, for He had the only home of which man can be sure, the home of God.

The more we examine the life of Christ, the more we feel that in this life there is an entire absence of any bending to expediency, or of overlooking the means because of the end. He never for one moment accommodates His life or teaching to any standard but the highest. He never lowers or relaxes that standard by a shade or a hairsbreadth, to make the road easy for the rich and powerful, or to uphold the spirit of His poorer followers when they are startled and uneasy.

For a time the bold and courageous words and deeds of

Christ attracted to Him a large following. But as time went on, and our Lord continued to denounce all unrighteousness, His enemies began to marshal themselves against Him and His bewildered followers. His violation of the Sabbath, His eating with publicans and sinners, His scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, each cost Him some of His followers and increased the number of His enemies. More and more He had to "tread the wine press alone" as the authorities pondered upon the means of His destruction. When He was face-to-face with the Tempter in the wilderness, He had deliberately rejected all aid from the powers and kingdoms of this world, and now, it seems, the powers of the world might prove too strong for Him.

The truly courageous man is not turned from his path by the fear of death, which is the supreme test of his courage. Nor was our Lord, even for a moment.

Whatever may have been His hopes in the earlier part of His career, by this time He had no longer a thought that mankind could be redeemed without His own sacrifice and humiliation. The cup had to be drunk to the dregs.

In the face of open enmity, and against the pleading of His faithful Disciples, Christ sets His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem. There, with His triumphal entry, He challenges the Jerusalem authorities to take Him. Not, however, until one of His own Disciples, Judas Iscariot, offered to sell Christ for thirty pieces of silver, did the authorities lay hands upon Him.

But how, it may be asked, can you recognize as perfect man, as the head and representative of humanity, one who showed such signs of weakness as Christ showed in the garden of Gethsemene? Admitting that the record of His prayer in Gethsemene is true, however, only enhances the courage of all that follows. It is His action when the danger comes, not when

He is in solitary preparation for it, which shows His courage.

As He goes forth to meet the soldiers, there is no attempt to avoid the outcome. Only a demonstration of His tremendous love, as He heals the ear of one of His enemies. Follow Him through the long night: to the Sanhedrin chamber, where He Himself furnishes the evidence which the chief priest sought for in vain while He was silent, to the court of the palace, where He bore the ribaldry and tortures and insults. Follow Him to the judgment seat of Pilate, and the scourging of the Roman soldiers; to Herod's hall and the insults of the Galilean court; back again to the judgment seat of Pilate, and so to the crown of thorns, the blood from which mingles with the blood from the scourging. Listen to the words of love and tenderness that He speaks from the Cross to which He is nailed, until, at the end, He is able to say, "It is finished," knowing that now His task on earth was complete and perfect. In all of this, it is impossible to find one momentary sign of fear or weakness.

To be a Christian, to follow this Person in the way that He has taken, is a difficult task. It demands moral as well as physical courage. When a man can ignore and rise above jibes at His religion, he shows the stuff of which he is made. To have held up before us an example of perfection, and to be told that we must be "perfect," even as our Father in heaven is perfect, is to ask for all of a man. And that is what our Lord wants. Even as we strive to fulfill our various vocations in this life, we must be ever preparing ourselves for the life that is to come. In the face of the facts of His life, no one has the right to refer to Christ as meek and mild, or to His Church as weak and effeminate.

A true Christian finds that, if he really tries to follow Christ, he must "deny himself, take up his cross" and follow steadfastly and courageously.



# 9

## OUR BOUNDEN DUTY

by

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### I

I HAVE often thought that the "Offices of Instruction" in The Book of Common Prayer might well be amended by adding after the question, "What is your bounden duty as a member of the Church?" these words:

"My bounden duty is . . . to obey Christ's Godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness. . . ."

(Collect, I Lent, p. 125).

These Godly motions, so far as Lent is concerned, are the compass of His mature life. They embrace every moment of His life from the day of His Baptism to the day of His burial. They incorporate every step and gesture and breath of His from the hills of Galilee to the hill called Golgotha. His Godly motions were certainly not confined to the limits of a mere two fortnights of fasting and prayer in the desert! Such a narrow bracketing of Lenten-life limits our vision both of Him and those of us who call ourselves "Christians."

What our Blessed Lord fought out in His soul on the Mount of Temptation, He turned to bring as a holy oblation to the

wilderness of the world below. He returned to teach the Truth, to do the good works, and to *be* the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). From that desert retreat, the Incarnation began to touch and fill the world below with newness of life.

But that was only the beginning. To His Church, His Living Body, He bequeathed the bounden duty to teach, to work, and to *be*: what He taught, His Church must teach; what He did, His Church must do; what He is, His Church must be. Our bounden duty, to which we are yoked in Holy Baptism, and which matures in the temptations and labors and sufferings of "this transitory life," is fulfilled finally at a place called Calvary. There is no resting place for Godly motion for those who would "carry through" this side of that faraway hill.

## II

The first glimpse we have of this Man, following His return from the Mount of Temptation, is that of the Teacher. His venture to expound upon the Holy Scriptures almost proved to be a fatal experience for Him. Fresh Truth ignites the passions of many men. It shatters their prejudices, and that is often unbearable pain. He brought Truth unto His own, but His own could not receive it. In His first mature moment of effort He became an expelled Teacher.

There were others, however, for whom His words were truly the "Words of Life." To them He went, there He set His school; Capernaum, The Ten Cities, Tyre, Sidon, Caesarea-Philippi, Samaria, Jericho, Jerusalem—wherever souls would gather with open ears. They realized that He did not speak as the pundits and self-styled philosophers who were also playing the peripatetic field of the day, but rather as One who spoke with authority.

There was something barren about the words He spoke, a blessed barrenness that blighted the silvery, staged oratory of the Scribes and the Pharisees, the "prophets" and the "seers." His speech was as unadorned as the arid eastern hills from which He came, but like the dome overarching the desert, there was clarity and freshness and intimacy in every word He spoke.

To some, at least, He "communicated." "The common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Effectual teaching is always, in every age, communicating. And it is not the easiest of the arts. The Teacher-Christ has often been given a minor role in deference to other "christs" in men's minds. But whenever this has happened, as it might be happening in our day of "religious revival," deep and dangerous doctrinal sags have weighed heavily upon the souls of men. If we take away the Teaching-Christ, or muffle His voice, or scramble His words, we have, indeed, no Christ of Truth.

Did He not know from His own temptation to obscure, to interpolate, to deny what was revealed to Him from His Father, the disaster to which distortion led? How imperative it was for Him that Truth be received as it was, and, in turn, communicated with simplicity! This He learned in the seminary of struggle in the temptations: Truth is positively put, no matter how deep the pain it draws. So He spoke there: "Man shall not live by bread alone!" "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!" "Get thee hence, Satan!" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

The divine imperative that He teach was fundamental to His holy order to lead "captivity captive." Chains of half-truth shackling the minds of men had to be broken. The links had to be pried open. Prying is not always without its ordeal.

It is inconceivable that our Lord put His mind aside during His days in the desert. It is not true that mental processes wane



during the rigors of rigid abstinence. In His hunger and weakness and faintness, Jesus' mind was alive, receptive, analytical. He knew what was happening to Him. He was being taught: He was learning what it was to learn. Inherent in the painful process is the urgency to share its fruits. Thus His first venture to teach others what it is to learn.

Had He given up in the face of expulsion from His home-synagogue, He would have given less than "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 80) of Himself

"for His Father's lambs  
winding their ignorant ways  
through the valley of the shadow of death."

He kept on teaching out of the experience of His own "divers temptations" in which His mind was tested and tempered to Truth. Like Moses bringing the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai, so Jesus returned from the desert, to the world below, teaching and preaching "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19).

He was not, however, to be trapped by a mass-education system and its *via media* methodology. He chose a few receptive minds and schooled them as a community. The first Christian theological seminary had one Teacher and some twelve students, and no halls of ivy. And there is no record of grades kept, nor of honorary degrees dished out at commencement time.

Yet it was a good school, fully accredited in the sight of God, and some of the lectures and seminars are not outmoded even after almost twenty centuries. Some of the Junior lectures, commonly called "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:1-7, 29), are still worthy of pondering, even by the post-graduate student of religion.

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His Disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them . . ." young, unlettered, more zealous than intelligent, by every standard poor pupils for the impact of Incarnate Truth. But He taught them, for it seemed good in His Father's sight; there are some things God hides from the "wise and prudent, which He reveals to the simple" (Luke 10:21).

He begins with a lesson on the subject of human hunger. He was an authority on the subject. One does not go foodless two fortnights without knowing what hunger is. A day's fast on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday is not enough to teach us the meaning of hunger. Only after forty days and forty nights can one know hunger as a real rather than a vicarious experience. He did not eat. He was numbered with the famished.

The Disciples knew about hunger. They knew about the widespread poverty that haunted their homeland down there below the mountainside. They knew about its ravaging power in the lives of unfortunate people: children, the stricken, the aging, their friends, their fellow-townsfolk, among their kin. Famine, poverty, hunger, they knew about as well as the One who was now speaking to them. But, so far as we know, not one of His Disciples had ever famished for a fortnight in all of his life. Even so, they must have hated the sight of hunger, for it is not a pleasant sight for any to behold.

Then He says, "Blessed are they that hunger. . . ." How stiff can dogma be! To discuss the subject of human hunger is one thing, but to preface, dogmatically, such a stark fact with a benediction, that is quite another thing. I suspect it was more than the Disciples could take just then. To them it would be like a modern preacher prefacing his sermon with, "Blessed

are they that suffer with cancer!" (He would probably be tried for heresy, or at least lose his parishioners to a more palatable "cult of reassurance.")

There was undoubtedly reaction among them. But He did not back and fill one whit. Had He done so, they would have "had Him" from that day on, "had Him" for their own, to twist and to warp, when they returned with Him to "preach the Gospel to the poor." Their answer to hunger was revolution, and here He makes it a happy state of existence!

To Him hunger was a "happy" experience, a blessing, because the very absence of satisfaction in abstinence livened the soul's appetite for fulness. It was a new dimension for the minds of the Disciples, to which they were not yet conditioned. When He spoke of hunger, they thought of bread. So had He, no doubt, in the desert. How impelling must have been the urge to stoop down and pick up a smooth gray stone and gnaw on it ravenously! Yet, the very resistance to temporize the tongue brought a sense of satisfaction no loaf could supply. And being still hungry, there was a happiness no gorging could ever give.

Here is the Teacher-Christ fulfilling His bounden duty to bring the seed of Incarnate Truth from the Mount of Temptation to the Mount of the Beatitudes; to plant it in the minds of Disciples to take down into the plains of Palestine where multitudes walked in darkness, famished and afraid. That was their bounden duty to fulfill, the very same as His.

Fulfillment, however, did not come over a week-end retreat. It took years. Devotion to their duty to teach demanded of them the same struggle through temptation that He endured. To the end they kept on falling in the street, clutching a crust of bread, "so that uprightness could not enter" their minds (Isaiah 59:14). Bruised by stones, broken by conscience, bleeding in



denial, they struggled along their weary way, from Galilee to Golgotha . . .

*"Then it happened!* While He was sitting at table with them He took the loaf, gave thanks, broke it and passed it to them. Their eyes opened wide and *they knew Him!*" (Luke 24:30, J. B. Phillips' translation).

In the agony of their hunger for Him, Truth matured within them. It was not bound up in a breviary for their private devotions. It was bounden in their very beings as The Proclamation they *had* to publish by "Godly motions, in righteousness, and true holiness!"

It is also our bounden duty: "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15:27).

### III

If some have taken the Teacher-Christ lightly, and thus their duty to teach loosely, others have taken the Teacher-Christ so seriously that He is kept in miniature for the world to see. He was, they emphasize, without peer among earth's pedagogues. And, if the world is to know the Truth that frees men's minds, teaching is the one compelling vocation of the Christian. But beyond that, they say, there is uncertainty, hearsay, conflict of opinions about Jesus of Nazareth.

The Father's business, however, which He knew at an early age that He must be about, involved more than a trusteeship of Truth and its disposition. There was work to be done, as there was Truth to be taught. It was work that could not be accomplished from a swivel chair, or even a rostrum. It was work that demanded the leather from the soles of His sandals, that put callouses on His hands and brought perspiration to His forehead. It was work that left Him weary in the nights that followed day, all the way from Galilee to Golgotha.

How could any serious student of our Lord's life, priestly or lay, fail to see a *real* bearer of burdens falling under His load, falling upon His face, His elbows, His knees, onto the stones of *Via Dolorosa*? We have all heard of the "power of positive thinking," but the power of positive thinking did not prevent Him from falling face-down upon the granite edges of steps leading to Golgotha!

The Teacher-Christ is at once the Worker-Christ, both the Christ of Holy Word and the Christ of Holy Work. He not only "opened His mouth and taught," but He also put His hands to the plow and sweated in labor's heat. It certainly was not with the wave of a magic wand that He worked "the works of Him that sent" Him (John 9:4) into the vineyard where the "harvest truly was plenteous, but the laborers were few" (Luke 10:2).

The Mount of Temptation was not merely a place of retreat and mental struggle. It was also a place where He fought a decisive physical battle in the flesh against the flesh. It was the place where the first perfect die of Truth was hammered out in tedious toil. And, when on the Mount of Beatitudes He opened His mouth to teach them, He also opened His hands to show them the marks of a workman. If His Disciples could not assimilate the full meaning of His words, "Blessed are they that hunger," they could at least see His hands and believe "because of what they saw Him do" (John 14:11).

Until recently, I had never thought of the actual labor involved in, for example, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the only mighty act of our Lord (miracle) specifically described by all four of the Gospel authors. I fear I have verged on thinking of it as a kind of "command performance," directed from under a palm tree in an oasis where there was much grass, for a picnicking crowd.

But intensive pastoral days have proved that a mob of hungry men is not susceptible to words, either of persuasion or harangue. Push button procedures, pulling strings behind the scene, clichés and homiletical hooks just do not persuade hungry men to sit down and listen to reason. It takes a lot of work—mind-work, hand-work, and leg-work—to reset the impulses of a breadless mob into the preparation for a feast.

Our Lord did that work to make the miracle a reality. It was a tense hour. The men were restless. It took more than an executive to bring order out of potential chaos; it demanded the expended services of a mediator. He went Himself into the vortex of the milling mass, breaking groups up, crystallizing others around saner personalities. He had to turn and squelch Philip's pessimism and chastise Andrew's subterfuge. It was all hard work: the making of a miracle is not an after-hours hobby.

The men were fed, not only with bread, but also with the example of His patient labor . . . and there were twelve baskets left over. Do you suppose the Disciples took them, one basket each, as a reminder that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word" of Truth that God speaks and every holy labor that He endures? Certainly, the Feeding of the Five Thousand is an attestation that it is our bounden duty "*to work* . . . for the spread of His Kingdom." We can hope that the Disciples took the twelve baskets with a blessing to those who were hungry!

Here we begin to see the "workability" of the Incarnation as it is extended to all mankind. Here we begin to see the seed-planting of the Catholic faith "for all people, in all times, in all places."

As a dogma of the Church, the doctrine of the Incarnation, of course, came later in its creedal consummation. Certainly,



however, the early fathers saw in the Feeding of the Five Thousand a humanly understandable concept of the work of Christ Jesus. Most probably, none of these men consciously formulated a Christology as they sat around eating, after three days without food. After all, these were hungry men, and here was food, and this Rabbi certainly had a way with stretching bread and making everybody happy!

Yet, lurking in their minds immediately there was, no doubt, an incipient aura of mystery, of a more-than-human power that had made this unexpected feast a reality. They were matriculated in the kindergarten of the Kingdom, although unconsciously, and were learning the first letter of what later was spelled out as

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”  
(John 1:14).

One of the Gospel-authors, at least, added this comment, in reflection, to confirm the impression His mighty work made on the multitude:

When the men saw this sign of Jesus' power, they kept saying, “This certainly is the Prophet who was to come into the world!” (John 6:14, J. B. Phillips' translation).

But there is more to the miracle than their concentration on Him—they also began to think about themselves, among themselves. Just a few hours previously it was a group of rugged individualists who tagged along after Him, anticipating something personal from Him. In the breaking of the bread, however, something unusual happened to their self-centeredness; it, too, began to break. Through the medium of sharing, His sharing and theirs, a sense of community began to spread like leaven in a loaf. Men turned to speak to each other for the first time in three days. Sitting on the grass

together, they reached into their garments and untied tightly tied pouches and shared.

They did not shape to this new relationship all by themselves. There was something about Him, something about His outgoing attitude, His concern for all, His calm going in and out among them, His deliberate decisions, that touched the emotions and minds of all who were gathered there.

This was more than group dynamics at work; it was Godly dynamics that leaped through the crowd and brought bread out of hiding and many mundane men into a sudden "spirit of unity." Taking place here was an extension of what took place on the Mount of Temptation, when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit stood knee-deep in the sand, in the Person of a mature Man, and broke the power of schism, forever.

This was His gift, which He brought from the wilderness and shared with these men on the grassy hillside; a gift as real as the bread they broke together, a gift as filling as the food they ate, a gift with a residue to be gathered into baskets.

Christ the Worker is equally as essential to the life of the Church as Christ the Teacher. When are we more clearly reminded of this than in Lent, when we walk with Him to His every mature labor, from Galilee to Golgotha? In Lent, we not only sit at His feet, but we also rise to our feet "to continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 83).

Lest we agree, then revert to the common practice of making a stab at it for forty days, let us remember that our holy faith allows for no relapsing from the laborer's task. We are to serve Him in holiness and righteousness "all our days" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 19), "all the days of our life" (p. 74), and

not just two fortnights with muscles untuned to the eternal exercise of loving labor.

#### IV

Some can see only the Teacher-Christ, some only Christ the Worker. Some see both, and both together: Christ the Teacher and the Worker—Christ, the Man who knew the Truth, and who actually practiced what he taught in his daily life along the dusty paths of Palestine. The minds and wills of multitudes have been captivated and inspired, in every generation, by this dual picture of the Man, and in response have pursued noble ideals and performed world-shaking deeds.

Yet, in the haunting longing deep within the human heart for flood tide in the Faith, this dual “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13), leaves us wading within the shallows. The heart of religion is “not an opinion about God,” nor a labor inspired by high ideal, but rather “a personal relationship with God.”<sup>1</sup> This means that we must not only know Him, not merely emulate His labors. It means in the end, that He must “dwell in us, and we in Him” (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 81).

Otherwise, all else that we do in His name, wearing His signet, displaying His escutcheon, processing with His Cross, is nought, irrelevant, dead . . . all “extraordinary acts and exercises of devotion” (The Book of Common Prayer, p. li), all corporal acts of mercy, all good works, deeds, sacrifices . . . all are counted as nothing in His sight unless “You . . . go on growing in Me and I . . . in you” (John 15:4, J. B. Phillips’ translation).

In our Blessed Lord’s own life, it is most certain that the

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<sup>1</sup> William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, p. 54.



Truth He spoke and the labor He assumed, all the way from Galilee to Golgotha, were merely sacraments of the Self He was, was becoming, indeed, had been from the beginning. The Person of Christ alone gives substance to the Truth He revealed and the work to which He turned His hand. And only as we are of that Life-Person do we partake of that Person's life from Galilee to Golgotha, from Golgotha to Glory.

So far as we understand, His maturity of Person began at His Baptism. Even though He was without spot of sin, His act was no feign of a professional dramatist. It was real. It was what He had to do in order to be Himself in *us*. Above all else, He was concerned with being, His own and ours. He had to *be* before He could teach and labor and suffer and die "for the sins of the whole world," even as a mortal man in love becomes "one flesh" with the one whom he loves. Our Lord was no patent Only-Begotten of the Father—He was the "Word made flesh," in us who have been engrafted into His Body in Baptism. (Cf. The Book of Common Prayer, p. 281.)

Again, in His struggle on the Mount of Temptation, the urge to be the Self the Father had given into Him was uppermost in His mind and deepest in His soul. This was not a staged prototype of what others in the wretched world below ought to do as prescribed spiritual disciplines. This was what He had to endure to fulfill the demands of His incarnate nature, that He might be "All in All," One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, not just an image projected arbitrarily into history.

The counter-urge to turn stones into bread, if acceded to, would have left Him merely with a message to hungry humanity to labor for the bread that perisheth. But in the flesh and blood struggle to experience in Himself the Truth that "man does not live by bread alone," He became the "Bread of

Life . . . that a *man* may eat thereof, and not die" (John 6:48, 50).

Again, in the Feeding of the Five Thousand, there was more of life in the making of the miracle than there was of loaves. His being among them, His influence upon them, and their response to Him of themselves, were nearer the heart of the miracle than the bread distributed among them. In the end, these hungry men recognized, at least debatingly, that there was more here than met the eye or satisfied the stomach.

The Bread of Life was infinitely more than He spoke about on the Mount of the Beatitudes or labored to provide for the hungry multitude that congregated in a Palestinian oasis one day. *He* is the Bread of Life who "came down from heaven. . . . My flesh, which I give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). He is the seed of the God-grain planted from above, nurtured in earthiness, and matured in Resurrection.

For even as the Propers (the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels) from Ash Wednesday to Passion Sunday allude to, or specifically describe, food-drink giving of God to us; so are the events of His Bread-Life treated in the Lenten Gospels.

The temptation to turn stones into bread is treated in the Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 126); the Gospel for Ash Wednesday is a part of the Sermon on the Mount (p. 125), possibly a commentary on the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that hunger . . ."; and the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Lent (p. 131) is the account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

This sequence, it appears, is a preparation, although I cannot say that it was consciously formulated by our liturgical forefathers, for the epitome of the Bread-Life revelation on Maundy Thursday night treated in the Collect and the Epistle (p. 152).

Might this not mean, in brief, that what our Blessed Lord

learned of Himself on the Mount of Temptation, what He taught on the Mount of the Beatitudes, and what He did among men in the Feeding of the Five Thousand, are introits to the institution of the Eucharist in the upper room? Here, indeed, is the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And His "Godly motions" around that blessed Board incorporated in His Disciples not only their admiration for the Truth He taught, their inspiration to emulate His deeds, but further their Person-in-person relationship with Him. The leaven of His life had finally worked its way into their very flesh and blood.

This is the Church in her Eucharistic expression and nature. This is the Church into which we have been grafted as members. This is the Body into which we are born as obedient parts of His "Godly motions." We are not "bounden" to argue whether or not the Real Presence is here; as members of Christ we are to be

... one body with Him, that He may dwell in us, and we in Him (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 81).

This is our bounden duty.

There is yet, however, the passion and death, through which "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 80) was consummated. The Garden of Gethsemane was the re-temptation within Him to be less than the Incarnate Self, and the experience demanded of Him a re-thinking of Truth and a labor that brought great beads of sweat from His Holy Body, even, as it were, great drops of blood. These are "Godly motions," too, which His living Body must endure.

And, finally, there is Golgotha. The taunting words which He first heard so clearly echo across the desert wastes, "*If Thou be the Son of God,*" now come from the brow of another hill



from the voice of a throaty throng whom He came to redeem, lambs for whom He was the Bread of Life.

"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!" (Matthew 27:40). This was not a temptation to deny what He had taught, nor what He had done. This was the final temptation to deny who He was—a sadistic appeal to the Self, a final earthly tempering of the Incarnate Son, as gold is tried in the fire.

His Life in us, and ours in Him, was indeed "finished" (John 19:30). And the imprimatur of the Incarnation was engraved that moment upon the soul of a man who had, no doubt, never heard Him teach nor beheld an act of His healing: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).

## V

The Person of Christ Jesus alone, ultimately, brings men to a credo of Him, and into a personal relationship from which neither "death, nor life . . . nor principalities, nor powers . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us . . ." (Romans 8:39).

Once engrafted into His Body, the Church, it is our bounden duty to "obey His Godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness" so that through us "all mankind should follow the example of His great humility" (Palm Sunday Collect, The Book of Common Prayer, p. 134).

This is not something we do on days off from the office. It is an all-demanding vocation, an all-year, all-life labor. It means that we must not only teach as He taught, act as He acted, love as He loved, forgive as He forgave, bless as He blessed. . . .

Infinitely more! It means that we must be born again of His Being, flesh of His Flesh, soul of His Soul, ever growing toward the "measure of the stature of the fulness" that was in Him,

recognizing that it is not a conquest we make, but rather an unmerited gift which He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

Lent is the binding of ourselves, our souls and bodies, to Him who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. And being bound, we are forever bounden to the glory of His Resurrection, indeed, partakers of Everlasting Life.

# 10

## HE DIED TO SAVE US ALL

*by*

THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN SEVILLE HIGGINS, D.D.

*Bishop of Rhode Island*

. . . Jesus was not put to death outside the walls, so that he might make the people holy by his blood.

—Hebrews 13:12 (New Testament in Basic English)

THERE are three hymns in our hymnal, all three written for children and by the same author. They are hymns for children but there is nothing childish about them, for they tell in simplest phrase the magnificent designs of God. "All things bright and beautiful" sparkles with the wonder of God's creative power; "Once in royal David's city" tells the never-to-be-forgotten story of Him who made Himself in the likeness of men; and "There is a green hill far away" speaks with simple poignancy about the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. To know hymns such as these is to know the timeless truths of Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption, which belong to our Christian faith.

There is a green hill far away  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

*(Hymn 65)*



Strange it is that God should have chosen Jerusalem of all places to be the scene of our redemption! There were cities far older, and many more famous. There was a city-palace in Crete thousands of years before Calvary; Athens had long since demonstrated the wonder of the human intellect; and Rome was the hub of a mighty far-flung Empire. Yet with that curious seeming perversity that marks much of God's dealings with man, He did not choose the cultured, the wealthy, the famous, or the powerful; He chose Jerusalem which had little to recommend it to be the scene of our redemption. Jerusalem had been a disappointment to God for most of its history; it has even been a disappointment to the idealistic Zionists of our own century. Yet here again God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise when He chose Jerusalem to be the scene of the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the Trial, the Scourging, and the Crucifixion. This was where "He died to save us all," on Calvary.

But in becoming the scene of our redemption, Calvary has acquired significance as a symbol of all human suffering, and Jerusalem has become a momentous sign of our ultimate destination. When we see someone bowed down with heartache and grief, do we not say, "He is going through his Calvary"? We also have a strong feeling that our own sorrows may be related to His in some mysterious way.

Still stands his cross from that dread hour to this,  
Like some bright star above the dark abyss;  
Still, through the veil, the victor's pitying eyes,  
Look down to bless our lesser Calvaries.

*(Hymn 531)*

The very name, Jerusalem, is a significant sign of our ultimate destination, of our final home. For Christians do not

think of death in terms of a six-foot grave but in terms of a heavenly home.

Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest;

\* \* \*

O sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear land of rest,  
Who art, with God the Father,  
And Spirit, ever blest.

(Hymn 597)

It has been rightly said that someone, sometime, somewhere, had to do what Jesus did if the human race ever was to be redeemed. Someone had to do it, and the Someone was God's Son. It had to be done at some time, and God chose those years we now memorialize as the watershed of human history. It had to be done somewhere, and Jerusalem was the place, just outside the city wall.

*"We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains He had to bear."* Every earnest preacher feels keenly his ineptness and inadequacy when he preaches on Good Friday. Even John Milton who wrote such a great "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" failed in a subsequent attempt to write about the Crucifixion. There is something about the Crucifixion that leaves us speechless. We shall never know, nor shall we ever be able to fathom, the agony of Calvary; but we must nonetheless try to understand, because we are persuaded that in some sense it really "was for us He hung and suffered there."

Certainly Jesus endured the greatest physical agony, of that there can be no doubt. Crucifixion was a devilish way of killing

people. The congestion of blood in various parts of the body due to the interference with the circulatory system would cause prolonged and agonizing pain. Yet this was not the worst part of the Crucifixion, because the worst of the pain was not physical, but mental and spiritual. He had to bear complete rejection by the Jews whose whole history up to that moment had been pointed towards His coming. Except for the soldiers, John, and Mary, Jesus ended His earthly life alone as far as human companionship went. Some years ago, a British diplomat, Sir Neville Henderson, wrote a book entitled *Failure of a Mission*. It was the story of his ambassadorship to Germany before World War II. Perhaps that is how His own mission looked to Jesus from His Cross. All the centuries of God's patient preparation of the Jews for their Messiah had now ended in this. All the works and the warnings of the prophets had gone for naught. He was despised and rejected of men indeed.

Added to all this there was the spiritual agony of the sin that was laid upon Him, the Sinless One; for "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:7). Surely we all have felt at times the weight of sin; our own sin or the sin of someone else. Surely at one time or another we have felt near the breaking point when sin's consequences faced us and weighed us down. But Jesus had laid on Him the whole world's sin; indeed He became sin for us.

"Behold! Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish, forced through the channels of a single heart" (F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul*). No wonder there was wrung from Him the cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" No wonder that we may not know, that we cannot tell, what pains He had to bear. All we can do is to try to understand, and to believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.



He hung there to bring the people of the world into one great family. In the physical world there are two great forces: the centrifugal force, which tends to make things fly apart, and the centripetal force, which tends to make things stay together. There are similar forces at work in human society; a force which makes men and nations split, divide, and fly apart. How else can we explain the constant failures in human relations, the persistent and often intentional misunderstandings between nations? More than anything else the world needs a healing, unifying power to bring all men together in a common understanding and brotherhood. This is why He hung there, for He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

He hung there to bring men to God by showing them that God does care for all mankind. It is not easy in this blood-blotted century to hold to the faith that there is a God who cares. Only as we look at the Cross does it become plain that if God acts like that, if God loves like that, then faith in a God who cares becomes not a possibility, but a fact.

*"He died that we might be forgiven."* He was always talking about forgiveness, was Jesus: the word and the idea occur again and again in the Gospels. He tells His Disciples how necessary it is; He preaches it to the multitudes. By word, by exhortation, by parable, and by illustration He drives home our need alike to be forgiven, and our need to forgive. His devastating story of the unforgiving servant, etched so sharply true to life, ends with the terrible warning from the lips of Jesus: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35). In another context, our very familiarity with the Lord's Prayer blunts the curse we often lay unconsciously upon ourselves when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we* forgive



those who trespass against us." Do we really mean that? Do we want God to be exactly as merciful to us, no more, no less, than we are to others?

But Jesus did not merely speak about forgiveness; He practiced it upon the Cross. Surely the true majesty of Christ's character was never so evident as when He said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In spite of all the silly things that clever men like H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw used to say about God and forgiveness, every honest man knows that he stands in need of being forgiven every day of his life. This verse is autobiography for most of us.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run  
And do run still, though still I do deplore?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore.  
But swear by thyself that at my death thy Son  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore  
And having done that thou hast done,  
I fear no more.

—John Donne

Those who know their own need of forgiveness, are themselves most forgiving of others. Thus they enter into a newness of life, which is life on a different level than heretofore. It is the life "in Christ" of which St. Paul speaks wherein we become new creatures. This is why He died.

*"There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin."* And that is literally true, for history has produced but one Person good enough to pay the price of sin. Samson was strong

enough, but sin may not be dealt with by physical strength. Aristotle and Plato were doubtless wise enough, but evil is not always susceptible to intellectual argument, because evil proceeds from the heart and not from the mind of man. Only one who had himself led a life supremely and uniquely good could contain in his very character the antidote for the poison of sin. The Gospels make quite clear the secret of Jesus' goodness; it lies in a statement which on the lips of any other must have been accounted blasphemy: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). There was no divided allegiance in Jesus' soul as there always is in ours. A former distinguished Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, speaks very feelingly and knowingly of the two selves which were always at warfare in his soul, the sinner and the saint. This again is autobiography for all of us, for the true story of our lives would have to be written by a hagiographer who was also a Lincoln Steffens. Jesus' relationship with God was so close and so complete that sin could not wedge its way between.

There was thus a direct relationship between our Saviour's goodness and His power over sin, the power that enabled Him to pay sin's price. There can be in us a similar though necessarily weaker relationship between our personal holiness and our power over sin. It is told of the late great Bishop Azariah of Dornakal that when he began work in Hyderabad at the turn of the century, his friend, Sherwood Eddy, did his best to dissuade the young Hindu Christian from undertaking the work. The people were "so debased, so sunken almost in savagery, the men such drunkards, and the women so stupid," that Eddy could see no possible excuse for a man of Azariah's ability wasting his life among them. Years later, when Eddy went back to Dornakal, he found his weak faith rebuked, for lives had been transformed, there was there a growing Chris-

tian community, and most of it had been done by the power of Christ working through the influence of one good man.

Be that as it may, the price of sin comes high; that is one of life's sickening lessons. Every true pastor has seen the price paid for sin. He has watched a home break up because a parent determined to follow his natural instincts. He has observed what happened to the children of such a home and how they bear the scars of their insecurity the rest of their lives. The price of sin comes high, so high, indeed, that we can never catch up with it no matter how much we try. Anyone who had accumulated so many debts he could not possibly ever pay them all would have but two choices: to go into bankruptcy, or else be forgiven the debts. We all are like that debtor, which is why this Someone came to pay the price and make it possible for us to be forgiven. Or to put it in the phrase of the hymn, "Unlock the gate of heaven and let us in."

"And we must love . . . and trust . . . and try." Every motto is an idea reduced to a few simple words. Every summary states a thesis crisply. We remember the familiar Summary of the Law when our Lord summed up in a few phrases the whole of the Mosaic Law. In just such a manner does the author sum up the message of this hymn in this last verse; it is a summary of what we must do about the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; love, trust, and try.

*"And we must love Him too."* St. John has a profound word on the right reason for loving God when he says: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). A long time ago I remember reading a story which, though simple, illustrates this point. It concerned a boy whose father had rescued him as an infant from a fire, losing his own life in the process. When the boy was now seven or eight years old, he asked his mother to tell him the story of his father. She did in simple, moving



words, and when she had finished there was a little silence and then the boy said: "Did he do that for me?" At that moment love for his father was born, when he realized that his father had loved him long before he knew what love meant. Again this is what St. John means about the love of God when he says: "We love Him because He first loved us." Here on Calvary we behold the extent and the depth of God's love of us.

I find, I walk, I love, but O, the whole  
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;  
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul,  
Always Thou lovedst me.

(Hymn 405)

*"And trust in His redeeming blood."* Someone has said that "All the world's a stage"; it would be much truer to say that "All the world's an altar," for without somebody's sacrifice, nothing of vital significance ever happens. "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins" is true to the experience of life; and somehow that blood shed on Calvary has since that day become a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." It has had and it does have power to redeem and cleanse people from their sins.

*"And try His works to do"* because faith in Christ's redemption is not merely contemplation but action. After the service of Holy Communion there is a beautiful thanksgiving prayer wherein we ask God's assistance after we have taken the Sacrament, that we may "continue in that holy fellowship and do all such good works as Thou has prepared for us to walk in." Faith and works must go together hand in hand, and the true life of faith is the life of fruitfulness. The late Dr. George Washington Carver, the great Negro scientist, made many notable discoveries over a long lifetime. One of them was that



certain of the pod-bearing plants have the power actually to make the soil in which they grow richer rather than poorer. They do not take from the soil, but rather add to it in the process of their growing. Here is a parable of what every Christian's life should accomplish; not deplete the soil of human relationships, but rather make it richer.

"And try His works to do." One of the most important works we Christians can do is to tell people about the good news of the redemption of the world by our Saviour on Calvary. We do not need to be college graduates to do that. We must tell people that there is a Man on the Cross!

Whenever there is silence around me  
By day or by night—  
I am startled by a cry.  
It came down from the cross—  
The first time I heard it.  
I went out and searched—  
And found a man in the throes of crucifixion,  
And I said, "I will take you down,"  
And I tried to take the nails out of his feet.  
But he said, "Let them be  
For I cannot be taken down  
Until every man, every woman, and every child  
Come together to take me down."  
And I said, "But I cannot hear you cry.  
What can I do?"  
And he said, "Go about the world—  
Tell everyone that you meet—  
There is a man on the cross."

—*Elizabeth Cheney*<sup>1</sup>

There *is* a Man on the Cross and we must love Him too, and trust in that redeeming blood, and try His works to do. Perhaps one of our greatest works is to tell people about Him.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, Harper & Brothers, 1948. By permission.

